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FOREWORD

The season of frost is teasing Western New York this week but the signs indicate that the growing season is at an end. Piles of leaves and the tang of outside-the-city-limits bonfires make an afternoon walk a sensory feast. The only aspect of this season that is burdensome is the ubiquity of political signs and television ads.

I am happy to report that there will be no price increase for *The Cord* for the upcoming year. Within the next month or so you will be receiving your subscription renewal notices. It would be a great service to us, if you receive a renewal notice for a sister/brother who has relocated, if you could send it on to the new address. Jill, our business manager, is gifted with patience when solving the mystery of why someone did not receive a renewal notice – or by extension, their first, or even second, issue of the new year – but it would be a blessing if we could make the address changes in a timely manner so there is no disruption to delivery.

Here at Franciscan Institute Publications we are very pleased to announce the printing of *The Life and Miracles of Saint Margaret of Cortona*. You can save a lot of money on a purchase if you receive our email blasts with special offers, so if we don't have your email address you might want to send it to us (Hint, hint!). But, if you're not particularly in the mood to read about a medieval saint, you might like to consider our newest offering from Bob Karris: *St. Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke's Gospel 30 Days of Reflection and Prayer*. With the coming of Advent, we will shift to Cycle C which features the Gospel of Luke. This would make a wonderful gift for those who like to pray with Scripture.

I would also like to thank Sister Noella Poinsette, O.S.F., for her photographic artwork on the cover of this issue. Sister Noella created this image after reflecting on the keynote addresses at the Annual Federation Conference in Cincinnati this past July. As always, I am happy to receive submissions for *The Cord*, articles, poetry, book reviews, or artwork. All is appreciated!

As we move further into the waning months of this year, let us keep always before us the tremendous gift we have from the Father in the

person of Jesus,
our Brother!

Daria R. Mitchell, O.S.F.

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**A RENAISSANCE OF CREATIVE FIDELITY:
RELEASING THE ENERGIES OF LOVE
IN THE CHURCH¹**

MARLENE WEISENBECK, F.S.P.A., PH.D., J.C.L.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the invitation to be with the Franciscan Federation this year in the capacity of featured speaker. Although I have attended several annual conferences, my absence in recent years was due primarily to my responsibilities in leadership for the LCWR. And I suspect that some of my experiences as LCWR president and some other ministry experiences that interfaced with the hierarchical church are at the heart of the invitation to be with you now. The context of such experiences impels us to ponder what to do when obsessions, sin, sensationalism, and out-of-control environments turn into flawed relationships in our church instead of relationships of steadfastness, penance, balance, and constancy in fidelity to the deepest loves of our lives. I have often wondered why hair shirts were ever needed to insure conversion in our lives. Often we have each other in situations that vex us and unravel our nerves. Our own humanity has the potential to stunt our progress in pursuing the ideals of holiness to which we have committed our lives.

I wish to dedicate this presentation to J. Lora Dambroski, O.S.F., Mary Hughes, O.P., Mary Whited, C.P.P.S., Pat Farrell, O.S.F., and Jane Burke, S.S.N.D., all with

¹ Marlene Weisenbeck, F.S.P.A., Ph.D., J.C.L., was a keynote speaker at the Franciscan Federation Annual Assembly in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 27-30, 2012.

whom I worked closely in the presidency of LCWR during the Apostolic Visitation of U.S. Women Religious and the doctrinal assessment of LCWR. Mary Whited's and Jane Burke's deaths occurred within four months of each other in the past year. When I was informed of their deaths, I felt drawn to listen to the *The Last Sleep of the Virgin* by John Taverner. The music's eschatological character is almost beyond one's grasp. The performers are directed to play "at the threshold of audibility." The music, without words, is a meditation on the Last Things. The score is headed by words: "still and quiet – intensely tender and fragile," and is reminiscent both of chant, the ethereal sounds of the Balinese gamelan and a series of luminous trills in the strings. One of the sections employs the ancient technique of *cancrizans* (with the motion of a crab) in which a single melody is played forward and backward simultaneously. The strings' languorous solo flights above the sweet tintinnabulations of the bells evoke the image of a soul floating free from the bonds of earth.

This muse with music is my tribute to both Jane and Mary who served LCWR with impeccable love and fidelity and to all women and men religious whose commitments are sometimes discounted at the threshold of audibility. Our ministry strives tenderly and in fragile quiet for its vision. Our dreams for God's reign in our world often follow the *cancrizans* trek of sea creatures in search of deep Mystery. Hierarchical *cappa magna* interventions simply cannot quell the freedom of souls in love with God's call. I think of the time in 2010 when the LCWR presidents were in Rome for our annual report to CICALSAL.² Cardinal Rodé, prefect of the Congregation at that time, chided us for "abandoning our mission," and then threateningly asked: "What shall I tell the pope about you when I visit with him soon?" And Mary responded firmly, "tell him that we are faithful"!

² The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

This presentation proposes to look at current experiences in our fractured and wounded church through the lens of the call to creative fidelity and how it is expressed within our Franciscan tradition. We immediately think of the Apostolic Visitation of U.S. Women Religious, the doctrinal assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and what might be considered a side bar to that, the investigations into Elizabeth Johnson's and Margaret Farley's books. And then there are the excommunications and anathemas over health care decisions and priestly ordination! What to do and how to witness at times like this can be a trying and daunting challenge. Sometimes it feels like we are trying our best to release energies to love in a time of ecclesial comedy and casualty, in "a time when we are about as welcome as adults at a teenage party"?³ We admit that these hierarchical inquiries seem like we are roaming about in a territory of menace where the reaction between the players in this drama is watched with scrutiny. Adding fascination to this exploration, the theme of this conference "Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church," suggests this is happening in a time when we are reconnoitering and trying to retrieve something. Retrieving what? And how does this relate to creative fidelity?

There is much to retrieve in a time of surprise and challenge – composure, for one thing, but more importantly a sense of spiritual, emotional and intellectual balance, and most importantly the conviction that our Franciscan religious life is centered in the One who calls us – the Christ, the One at the heart of our love.

Thinking about "reconnoitering" at this time in history provides further reflection. A number of definitions carry the day and some have meaning for us, such as: to explore, often with the goal of finding something or some-

³ David Flood and Athena Calogeras, *For People: An Introduction to Franciscan Life* (Chicago: Haversack, 1990), 29. The authors used this expression to describe Mary of Oignies, a Beguine who stepped out of a place of material privilege and a world of male control and domination in order to turn toward people and their needs.

body; an exploratory search conducted to gain or collect information. The derivation of the word comes from the obsolete French *reconnoître*, literally “to recognize.” This leads us to think of a reconnaissance mission of searching, of looking to see if what we think we know is true. We could apply this idea either to the Vatican’s investigations or to our own response of insisting that we are entitled to be heard in some definite way.

Without question, the Vatican inquiries have given impetus for women religious in this country to identify with the aura around these words and to claim the best of their lives as consecrated women in not only the ecclesial environment but the world in general. All of us, women and men, desire to be recognized for living our consecration authentically and with integrity.

We find the idea of creative fidelity in *Vita Consecrata* 37 and in other historical texts, both papal and philosophical. My goal is first, to provide reflection on the call to creative fidelity by specifically addressing this concept found in *Vita Consecrata*, *Starting Afresh from Christ* and other related documents; and secondly to reflect on some pivotal philosophical ideas that can help release energies of love in the midst of what is transpiring in our lives at the present time.

AN ECCLESIAL CALL TO CREATIVE FIDELITY

The words “creative fidelity” are used three times in three Vatican documents about religious life – not a big emphasis, it could be observed or expected, in a church that emphasizes millennial tradition. However, those words are found quite frequently throughout various other church documents of the Second Vatican Council, as well as those just mentioned.

The call to creative fidelity in *Vita Consecrata* 37 is an invitation to respond to the ever-creating God of time and the universe. In a paragraph heading entitled “Creative Fidelity,” it reads:

Institutes of consecrated life are invited courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world. This invitation is first of all a call to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life. But it is also a call to ... develop a dynamic fidelity to their mission, adapting forms, if need be, to new situations and different needs, in complete openness to God's inspiration and to the Church's discernment.⁴

Two years later, another document, namely the *Instruction on Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation* issued by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) on October 31, 1998 gave a more specific definition of creative fidelity signifying a harmoniously blending in the life and mission of the People of God, the gifts and experiences which enrich it, as well as taking care that religious not become part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way. Emphasis is given in the text to the Holy Spirit's experience in the founders which is to be deepened and constantly developed by them as well as harmonized in the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth.⁵

⁴ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (March 25, 1996), paragraph 37. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata_en.html

⁵ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation* (October 31, 1998), Paragraph 7.1. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_20021999_formation_en.html

Every institute has a primary responsibility for its own identity. In fact, "the charism of the founders, an experience of the Holy Spirit transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth," is entrusted to each institute as its original patrimony for the benefit of the entire Church. Cultivating their own identity in "creative fidelity," then, means harmoniously

The call to enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness, to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life, conformity to the Lord, and cultivating their own identity in "creative fidelity" in these documents have been clear imperatives for the renewal of religious life during the past fifty years. Like their founders, religious institutes are ready to open the way of adventure, peace and compassion for others.

In the wake of John Paul II's *Novo Millennio Ineunte* welcoming the third millennium, a third document from CICLSAL entitled *Starting Afresh from Christ*,⁶ written to religious in 2002 took its points of departure from *Vita Consecrata*. The intention, the authors note, was not to produce another doctrinal document but rather to invite consecrated men and women in their particular situation and culture to focus primarily on spirituality ... (Part I), to express gratitude and wholehearted esteem for what consecrated life is and for what it does; (Part II), to call for a renewed commitment by living the spirituality of communion in a unique way; (Part III), and to accompany consecrated persons on the streets of the world where Christ walked and today is present, where the Church proclaims him as Savior of the world, where the Trinitarian life spreads communion in a renewed mission.

Moreover, clear emphasis was given to "constant openness" to the Spirit's action in responding to their times. The document states:

It is fitting to remember the ability of holy founders and founders to respond to the challenges and difficulties of their times with a genuine char-

blending in the life and mission of the People of God, the gifts and experiences which enrich it, as well as taking care that religious not "become part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way."

⁶ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2002), Paragraph 4.

ismatic creativity ... to live in a constantly renewed fidelity to the call of the Spirit.⁷

... consecrated life itself, of its nature, calls for the constant openness of those who are called to it ... open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them ... formation must be attentive to the need to plant in the hearts of young consecrated persons those human, spiritual and charismatic values necessary to make them suitable to carry out a creative fidelity ... an openness and docility to the Spirit's action, which is always new and creative, is required.⁸

Starting Afresh from Christ echoed a pressing invitation of John Paul II at the beginning of the third millennium. The document reiterated his words *Duc in altum!* "Cast out into the deep," to enliven new hope and awaken a desire for a more evangelical life that would further break open the horizons for dialogue and mission. It set a context for observations about contemporary ecclesial events that threaten our peace of mind and the confidence that we have lived in obedience to our tradition and the mandates of our forms of life.

The Apostolic Visitation is nearing its conclusion now as we await the final reports from Rome. The doctrinal investigations of LCWR are continuing in earnest. The media keeps us abreast of what is happening with others who are being silenced and investigated. We have experienced these as sentinel events that threaten our balance. It is not my purpose to further comment on these processes, but to propose from contemporary philosophy and our own Franciscan tradition ways in which we can move with balance for the sake of effective relationships in our church.

Inevitably, there will be tensions between theory and practice, between the authentic promptings of the Holy

⁷ *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 13, 14.

⁸ *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 15, 20.

Spirit and her action in the prophetic gifts of the people. Archbishop Joseph Tobin, recently stated. “We do not go to the marginalized and excluded in order to create some sort of parallel Church. Rather, we are willing to live with an often painful, but potentially creative tension with the Pastors, who also must recognize that the consecrated life, if it is to be true to itself, will always be a little problematic for the Shepherds.”⁹

PREACHING ABOUT CREATIVE FIDELITY IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

Creative fidelity is not a concept new to John Paul II in his post-synodal exhortation *Vita Consecrata* of the late twentieth century. In a recently discovered manuscript, another pope of the fourth century – Pope Athanasius of Alexandria, a Coptic Orthodox pope – likewise provides us with a breath of freshness. Athanasius was an avid fighter of the Arian heresies. He did not mince words with his flock. For example, he told the community’s most respected members that they seemed willing to dare the crossing of land and sea to gain one single convert only to make this convert twice as much a child of Hell as they were themselves (Matt 23:15). This he deemed folly, arguing that creative fidelity must be centered on the faith shared by the Church from its origins. Any other argument about innovation is simply madness, he declares. A portion of his text reads:

What is this madness I hear about ‘*creative fidelity*’? For it is actually reported to me that whenever one of you talks about being faithful to tradition, [your] first act is to parrot mad words about how ‘Being Orthodox has never been a matter of mindless parrot-like repetition of the past, but always a matter of creative fidelity.’ What madness is this?

⁹ Joseph Tobin, C.Ss.R., *What are we missing? What should we say?* Conference of Major Superiors of Men (Long Beach, CA: Sixth Annual Summer Conference, August 4-7, 2010), 21. Manuscript.

Is creative fidelity the fundamental truth about how to be an Orthodox Christian? Then why do we only hear about this at a time when people love innovation, when the madness of too many innovators to mention poisons the air as effectively as the heretic, the Antichrist, Arius? How is it that the Fathers, who are also alleged to participate in this [diabolical] 'creative fidelity,' did not understand what they were doing, but instead insisted in one and the same faith shared by the Church since its beginning? ...¹⁰

In this seemingly harsh approach about innovative evangelization, Athanasius preached vigorously about following the way of Christ in creative fidelity through the

¹⁰ Athanasius, *On Creative Fidelity*, Trans. Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward <http://jonathanscorner.com/athanasius/printer.html>
The remainder of the text reads:

There is something the Apostle so much wants you to understand, and perhaps if you understood it better you would not go so far astray as to seek the living among the dead (Luke 24:5) in your quest for creative fidelity. How is it that you seek the living among the dead (Luke 24:5)? Christ is the head of the Church (Eph 5:23), of every man (I Cor 11:3), of every authority (Col 2:10), of all things (Eph 1:22), and God is the head of Christ (I Cor 11:3). Christ is the one head, and because of him there are many heads.

If both incorruptible and unchangeable Heaven is the head of corruptible and changeable earth and yet earth manifests Heaven, what does this say about this strange thing you laud called 'creative fidelity'? Does it not say something most disturbing? Does the one and the same faith, alive from the days of the apostles, belong to the corruptible or the incorruptible? Is it not unchangeable?

What then of those adaptations you make—even if some are good and some are even necessary? Do they not belong to the realm of the changeable and the realm of the corruptible?

... Remember that you are not walking, as you say, the Orthodox System of Concepts, but the Orthodox Way. Remember that feeding the hungry (Matt 25:35); is greater than raising the dead. Never let the lamp of your prayers go out (I Thess 5:17). Like the Father, be a father to the fatherless (Ps 68:5; Isa 1:17). All the brethren salute you (Rom 16:16; II Cor 13:13). Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16; I Cor 16:20; II Cor 13:2; I Thess 5:26; I Pet 5:11).

essential beatitude life of feeding the hungry, tending the orphan, staying true to prayer and loving one another affectionately.

CREATIVE FIDELITY IN CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM AND CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

Let us turn now to Christian existentialist Gabriel Marcel and theologian Luke Timothy Johnson. Marcel understands creative fidelity as the solution for the problem of time and change in human relationships.¹¹ In negotiating interpersonal relationships, he enumerates seven moral and intellectual qualities that are prerequisite for relational effectiveness in any context, be they in the wider arena of ecclesial environments or the internal life of our own communities. They include trust, respect, attentiveness, meditation on the other in silence, patience, suffering, and creative fidelity. Luke Timothy Johnson has taken a particular interest in these virtues as a means of learning about the person of Jesus or the person of our sisters and brothers wherever we find ourselves in the world of ecclesial relationships. His insights prompted me to seek out evidence for these moral and intellectual qualities as articulated in our own Franciscan tradition. Here are a few examples which we might think of as essential tools for rebuilding our own relationships with one another and within the church in our time.

GABRIEL MARCEL'S MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

TRUST

**Trust is a fundamental openness
to the reality of the other.**

Trust involves a certain basic acceptance of the other – a belief that the other *is*, that the other is *real*, that the other is *true* – prior to any empirical calculation. With-

¹¹ Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1964), 147-74.

out basic openness, no learning about the other can take place. It is clear that having such trust in the other means at some level that the learner is **entrusting** oneself to the other, by relinquishing the sort of control that one normally has over something one might be studying.¹²

Ethicist Richard Kyte emphasizes that ethical relationships are passed along from one person to another on the basis of trust. If trust is broken, it can take years or even an entire generation to rebuild. Trust is a fragile condition in our church and society, a condition and quality of personal demeanor that must be continually nurtured by every individual. As Gabriel Marcel understands it, trust will not ever be established once and for all. Each in its own time, every generation must do what is theirs to do.¹³

From our Franciscan tradition there is a little story about how Brother Riccerio grew from fear of Francis to a sense of freedom and grace because Francis received him in trust and love.

There was a brother called Riccerio, noble in birth and behavior. He placed such **trust** in the merits of blessed Francis that he believed that anyone who enjoyed the gift of the saint's affection would be worthy of divine grace; any without it would deserve God's wrath. He therefore anxiously longed to obtain that benefit of his intimacy, but *he was very fearful* that the saint might discover in him some hidden fault and then he would actually be further away from the saint's good will. These deep fears tormented that brother every day, and he did not reveal his thoughts to anyone. One day, worried as usual, he approached the cell where Saint Francis was praying. The man of God knew of both his coming and his state of mind and called him

¹² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (New York: Harper One, 1999), 59-60.

¹³ Rich Kyte, "Are We Making Moral Progress?" *The La Crosse Tribune* (January 29, 2012), D4.

kindly to himself. “My son,” he said, “let no fear or temptation disturb you any more, for you are very dear to me, and among all those who are dearest to me I love you with a special love. Come to me confidently whenever you want, and leave me freely whenever you want.”

The brother was extremely shocked and overjoyed at the words of the holy father. From that time on, knowing he was loved, he grew – as he believed – in the *grace of the savior*.¹⁴

This little story confirms that love cannot exist without trust.

RESPECT

**Respect is like awe, an intuition
of the dignity of all things created
and of their preciousness in God’s eyes.
It acknowledges that the other
is equally as worthy as oneself.**

Clare addressed Agnes of Prague as “Lady worthy of great respect” because she was “the spouse, mother and sister of [her] Lord Jesus Christ.” According to Abraham Heschel, respect is awareness that things not only are what they are, but also – however remotely – stand for something absolute. What can be more absolute than being spouse, mother and sister of Jesus Christ? In the Third Letter to Agnes, Clare emphasizes the preciousness of Agnes by reiterating: “To the most respected in Christ and the sister to be loved before all mortals ...”¹⁵

¹⁴ Thomas of Celano *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, in Vol. II of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents: The Founder*, ed. Regis Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 2000), 276-77.

¹⁵ “The First Letter to Agnes of Prague,” *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, revised edition and translation by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. (New York: New City Press, 2006), 44. The second quotation is from “The Third Letter to Agnes of Prague” on page 50 of the same source.

Trust involves an element of *respect* as well. The other is not simply a thing to be grasped, measured, corrected, controlled and catalogued. Respect means the acknowledgment of the other, as truly other than the self, as equally worthy as oneself, as having as much interiority and freedom as oneself. Without trust and respect, shared understanding is lost, perhaps even impossible. The other person—the one learned about—is reduced to object only. As a result both the spirit of the learner and the spirit of the one acknowledged are occluded.¹⁶ Our Third Order Rule of Life speaks of respect as one of ways of witnessing authentically as a Franciscan person.

Let the sisters and brothers be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, mild and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever they go throughout the world, they should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgmental towards others (TOR Rule 20).

ATTENTIVENESS
is about alertness, receptivity,
and “leaning toward the other.”

The word “concentration” would suggest an intense focusing of the mind in order to see or hear something “accurately.” Attentiveness is present, however, when we truly listen to the other person, when we contemplate the other person. It does not assume that the other is already known or has been “figured out.” Instead, it assumes that the other is always capable of change and surprise and fuller knowledge. The attitude of attentiveness contains within itself space for the other to remain other; it does not rush to change the other or to control the other ... it is a mental and moral attitude that acknowledges and accepts the freedom of the other.¹⁷ In the book of Wisdom, we are told how to seek wisdom:

¹⁶ Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*, 60.

¹⁷ Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*, 60.

Wisdom makes her rounds, seeking those worthy of her, and graciously appears to them on the way, and goes to meet them with full attention.¹⁸

Clare's insistence on continual gazing on the mirror of Christ and contemplating there blessed poverty, holy humility, and inexpressible charity,¹⁹ without doubt, prompted her to the attentive service among her sisters that the witnesses of the canonization process speak of. For example,

Sister Pacifica de Guelfuccio of Assisi and Sister Benvenuta of Perugia ... the blessed mother was humble, kind, and loving to her sisters, and had compassion for the sick ... she served them and washed their feet and gave them water with her own hands. Sometimes she washed the mattresses of the sick ... and at night covered them from the cold.²⁰

MEDITATION ON THE OTHER IN SILENCE:
It is in the soil of silent reflection that learning
about the other puts down deep roots.
The radiance of existence
fosters the most genuine meeting with another.

“Where there is inner quiet and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor restlessness,” Francis said in Admonition 27.4 To truly learn the person of Christ or to learn about another person, it is necessary to *meditate* on the other in silence. Though this reflexivity is obvious when we fall in love with another person, we often forget how critical it is to all interpersonal learning. Time and space and silence are required to ponder what the other per-

¹⁸ Wisdom 6:15-16. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/wisdom/wisdom6.htm>

¹⁹ Clare of Assisi. “The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague” in *CA:ED*, 55. The whole letter is about gazing, contemplating, and considering.

²⁰ “The Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi” in *CA:ED*. This attentiveness to her sisters was mentioned repeatedly in the Acts of the Process of Canonization on pages 147, 150, 157, 168, 169, 172, 178.

son has said or done in our presence. In such silence we imaginatively summon the other's presence, can picture him or her in characteristic motion, assess what we have just heard or seen in the light of what the other has already revealed of oneself. Without such opportunities to reflect and ponder, knowledge of the other person remains episodic, disconnected, superficial and sometimes suspicious and judgmental. It is in the soil of silent reflection that learning about the other puts down deep roots.²¹

Gazing on another in silence, without exchanging words or touching, one can look at a face and see there the suffering the person has endured. One can feel her triumphs, her regrets, her hopes and dreams. The power of empathy for the other and a realization of an ineffable sameness shining through every person, is something akin to the radiance of existence. This is what is most genuine about us when all is said and done, and the recognition of it fosters the most genuine meeting with another.²² Clare's own silent reflection on the suffering Christ provided the basis to encourage her own sisters and Agnes of Prague to do likewise.

... embrace the poor Christ. Look upon him Who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in this world for Him. Most noble Queen, gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate your Spouse (2LAg 18-20).²³

St. Bonaventure once said that God gave us three eyes: the eye of the body, a physical eye through which we see things; the eye of the mind, a capacity to see things through reasoning and thought; and the eye of the soul, a capacity to see, feel and understand the things of God. To engage the eye of the soul is about leaning our head on

²¹ Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*, 60-61.

²² Catherine Ingram, *Passionate Presence* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003), 125-26.

²³ Clare of Assisi, "The Second Letter to Agnes of Prague," in *CA:ED*, 49.

the heartbeat of another and then turning our eyes out to the world to see things from that perspective.

In 2008 the Vatican Office for Consecrated Life expressed this beautifully in its Instruction on ...

... the authentic experience of God always remains an experience of otherness.... The mystics and all those who have tasted intimacy with God, remind us that the contact with the sovereign Mystery is always contact with the Other, with a will which is at times dramatically dissimilar from our own. To obey God means, in fact, to enter into an order of values which is “other,” taking on a new and different sense of reality, experiencing an unthought-of freedom to reach the threshold of the mystery.²⁴

PATIENCE

Patience is necessary because persons and situations keep changing. Personal learning cannot take place all at once, but only with the passage of time.

On his electronic newsletter of January 31st this year, Fr. Ron Rolheiser said:

Our age is characterized by impatience, by an unwillingness to ache, to long, to yearn, to sweat lonely tears in the garden as we wait for new birth. More and more, we are becoming a culture that is incapable of remaining within emotional suffering. This is especially true when we are dealing with difficult people and situations. It would be easier to walk away from it all and simply find a comfortable and righteous place to critique the reality in which we find ourselves.

Rolheiser continues:

²⁴ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “The Service of Authority and Obedience” (May 5, 2008), paragraph 7. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsrlife/documents/rc_con_ccsrlife_doc_20080511_autorita-obbedienza_en.html

Frequently we see impatience in our inability to handle tension within relationships and within our lives in general. Because of this, we never give proper birth to anything, love, life or meaning. Pain is a pregnancy ... Pregnancies must be carried to term. Today, we end most of our pain artificially, by caesarean. Virtually everything in our lives is born prematurely, not fully formed, unable then to survive. That is why our lives are full of infidelities, things gone sour and superficiality. When we are in pain, instead of asking: Can I stay with this pain? Is there a pregnancy for rebirth in this tension?, we do whatever we can simply to relieve the tension. We never cry enough tears to bring the messiah to birth.²⁵

At first acquaintance with another person, we are often tempted to “analyze” the other in an attempt to “figure her out.” Generally, though, as the attitudes of trust, respect, and attentiveness continue over a period of time, we come to realize that our initial conclusions are in need of revision. Since the person keeps changing, our learning of him or her must keep pace and we change too. This means that *patience* is a necessary component in personal learning.²⁶ In Clare’s *Form of Life* is an emphatic exhortation to patience.

Let them direct their attention to what they should desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, blame and accuse us, for the Lord says: Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (RC1 10:9-13).²⁷

²⁵ Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., Electronic Newsletter (January 31, 2012) <http://www.ronrolheiser.com/columnarchive/?id=756>

²⁶ Johnson, *Living Jesus* ..., 61.

²⁷ Clare of Assisi, *CA:ED*, 123.

Patience was a virtue mentioned by five witnesses in the Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi (PC 172, 173, 178, 184, 187). Furthermore, Thomas of Celano in the 1228 Life of St. Francis articulated patience as one of the outstanding strengths of the Poor Ladies at San Damiano: “They are so adorned with the virtue of patience in all these things, that adversity of tribulation, or injury of vexation never breaks or changes their spirit.”²⁸ We need to pray to Clare for her spirit of patience.

Clare and Cardinal Hugolino (later Gregory IX) did not get along as well as we might believe. Gregory IX sought to cancel the “Privilege of Poverty” and in *Quo elongati* (1230), he ruled strictly about the access of brothers to the cloistered sisters. It took Clare years of patience to have officially, canonically acknowledged that she was part of the same family, the same movement as Francis, that he had, indeed, accepted her (RCI 6:1-5).²⁹ Clare lived for more than thirty-five years with the older monastic Rules of Life imposed on her. Finally, in 1247 she began in earnest to write her own form of life.

Moreover, patience was repeatedly mentioned by the witnesses to the acts of canonization and was so prominent in the minds of those who shared her life that it was also mentioned in the official notification of her death.

The patience of those whose vision springs from a consideration of the Godhead produces the delights of paradise for the one who is patient and will purchase the riches of an eternal reward.³⁰

²⁸ Thomas of Celano, *FA:ED* 1, 399-400. The other principal virtues of the Poor Ladies were mutual charity, humility, virginity, highest poverty, abstinence and silence, and contemplation. Witnesses in the Acts of the Process repeatedly name charity, humility, kindness, poverty, fasting, compassion, virginity, prayer, uprightness and prudence as the examples of virtues shown to them by Clare.

²⁹ David Flood, *Out of the Shadows: Clare and Franciscan Women*, ed. Jean François Godet Calogeras (Chicago: Haversack, 1994): 90-92, 136.

³⁰ *CA:ED*, 138.

Francis likewise was preoccupied with the virtue of patience. In verse 12 of *The Praises of God*, Francis named God by saying: *You are humility. You are patience.* These praises of God are aspects of God's being and of God's gifts to human beings. This call to praise is the effect of faith or faithfulness which is basic to attitudes of respect and recognition. How well we remember the story of Francis and true joy when he was refused shelter by his own brothers. One can speak of true joy to whom it is given to endure when one's sisters and brothers don't like you at all, but can nevertheless retain one's inner peace. It would seem that joy would be entirely antithetical when one is rejected, treated with hostility, tormented by cross-examination, and made to feel inadequate. Yet this very quality of "joyful bearing in patience" was attributed to Francis by those who knew him well. Humility, patience and joy are the coordinates of a Christ-follower's life in faith, and only our Trinitarian God can be the origin this strength.

Francis devoted an entire admonition to patience and emphasized that patience is opposite to anger.

The servant of God cannot know about much patience and humility [one] has when things are going [one's] way. When, however, the time arrives that those, who should have helped him, do the contrary, as much patience and humility as [one] has at that time is as much as [one] really has and nothing more (Adm 13).³¹

Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor disturbance (Adm 27:2).

³¹ Francis was heir to the tradition of peacemaking in the spirit of the Gospel Beatitudes. He begins the Admonition On Patience with Matt 5:9 about the peacemakers and then exhorts that patience and humility must be living realities when one's life is besieged with betrayal, discord or any kind of adverse experience. See Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1999), 137-38, 297, 311.

Patience is part of understanding the paschal Mystery. Hopeful waiting or bearing with one another is its natural sister.

SUFFERING

**Paschal Mystery as quintessential context
for suffering**

**Although he was Son, Jesus learned to obey
through suffering; but having been made perfect,
he became for all ... the source of eternal salvation
(Hebr 5:8).**

The ancient Greeks believed that to learn included suffering and that patience was axiomatic to suffering. Learning demands suffering because it is painful to open the mind and the heart to new truth. Pain results from the need to stretch mental and affective muscles around new ways of viewing others and the world in relationship. When we are learning about another person, there is inevitably emotional pain, for the very act of entrusting our self to another means a de-centering and displacement of self-preoccupation. Furthermore, the other can violate our vulnerability and cause us pain ... personal learning is always accompanied by suffering, and patience is the virtue that makes such suffering positive and meaningful.³² Again, our Third Order Rule of Life provides the ultimate challenge.

... they should be prepared to expose themselves to every enemy, visible and invisible for love of him because the Lord says: 'Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, theirs is the kingdom of heaven' [Matt 5:10] (TOR Rule 30).

In her fourth letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare revealed her mystical life by disclosing how she attained union with God (4LAG24-32). She indicated that her vocation

³² Johnson, *Living Jesus...*, 61.

was confirmed by praying before the cross. Clare spent forty years before that cross in San Damiano, the cross which also spoke to Francis. Designating Christ as the mirror of God, Clare tells Agnes that she too is a mirror of God. Clare associates the clearest point in the mirror – its center and depth – as the place of charity. Christ’s shameful suffering and death on the cross is found there. Using the faculties of the mind in meditation (gaze, consider) and the affections of the heart (contemplate, imitate) was the way that Clare became united with Christ.³³

Cruciform love is the only way we can navigate the raging energies of misunderstanding, violence, unforgiveness, and redemptive reconciliation. Obedience to suffering is an acceptance that with my sisters and brothers I might discover who I am and who I might become; that I am not the master of my own identity. This is the penultimate necessity for creative fidelity.

CREATIVE FIDELITY

To be truly faithful, one must be creative because the other, as free subject, always changes. Creative fidelity is the willingness to trust, to be attentive to, and suffer with the other even as the other changes.

Luke Timothy Johnson, writing about Marcel’s idea of “creative fidelity,” says this:

Because interpersonal learning takes place intersubjectively over a long period of time, it demands *creative fidelity*.... Fidelity is the attitude of trust extended through time. To learn from another we must stick with the other (loyalty), be willing to endure with the other through a variety of circumstances. Pulling away, refusing to remain atten-

³³ Ingrid Peterson, “Clare of Assisi’s Letters to Agnes of Prague: Testaments of Fidelity,” In *The Writings of Clare of Assisi: Letters, Form of Life, Testament, and Blessing*, ed. Michael W. Blastic, O.F.M., Jay M. Hammond, and J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2011), 48-49.

tive, abandoning the other altogether means cutting off the process of inter-subjective learning. Here again, patient persistence is frequently put to the test through suffering.

The other part of the concept of creative fidelity is equally important: to be truly faithful, one must be *creative*. This is because the other, as free subject, always changes. Loyalty to what a person used to be is not creative fidelity. Loyalty to one's ideal image of the other is not creative fidelity. Not even loyalty to one's own first commitment of loyalty is creative fidelity. Creative fidelity is the willingness to trust, be attentive to, and suffer with the other even as the other changes. It is a living process, because it is a process that goes on between ... living, conscious, and free subjects.³⁴

Ronald Rolheiser emphasizes that, except for bitterness which must be rejected, the faithful response accepts suffering. To be faithful today means to live in pain, in tension, in frustration, in seeming compromise, misery and sometimes hatred.³⁵ It is in such vulnerability that we inherit and inhabit the earth.³⁶

Our Third Order Rule assists us in living into creative fidelity, not only within our communities but also in the wider ecclesial environment.

Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another, but let them willingly serve and obey each other with that genuine love which comes from each one's heart (TOR Rule 25).

Creative fidelity is a commitment of the spiritual journey, the goal being to uphold our accountability in ways that really matter and in ways that honor the unpredict-

³⁴ Johnson, *Living Jesus...*, 61-62.

³⁵ Ronald Rolheiser, E Newsletter, February 7, 2012.

³⁶ "We share one planet bonded by our vulnerability," said President Obama in reflecting on the earthquake and tsunami in Japan on March 11, 2011.

ability of life. It is a living process. Marcel would emphasize that life's problems disappear once they are solved, but life's mysteries tap directly into our intuitions and linger forever.

Relationships within our church may bring forth a host of problems. They also serve as a never-ending source of mystery and spiritual awakening. The key is to keep a watchful eye on what really matters – not that which requires blind allegiances or public approvals, but the ones that flow from a wise and compassionate heart, the heart of the Christ who calls us daily into loving relationships. Blessed John Paul II writing on the twentieth anniversary of the encyclical *Populorum progressio* highlights the critical place of relational life as a moral category, stating:

It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is solidarity.

... a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.³⁷

Fidelity is insufficient. It has to be coupled with creativity for the reign of God to be realized. Our Franciscan tradition offers insights for navigating creative fidelity. Duns Scotus enlightens our understanding of the relationship between creativity and fidelity by explicating how the virtues of justice and prudence can be ways of mediating certain principles in relationships. Prudence, as knowledge and excellence, is a type of moral beauty. It functions in an artistic manner by identifying what ele-

³⁷ John Paul II. *Sollicitudo rei socialis (Care for Society)* http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html

ments ought to be present, judging actions according to a whole of beauty or completeness, and then adjusting human response in light of specific conditions present in a given reality. People learn behaviors but through prudence are invited into reflective insights.³⁸

The notion of prudence appears four times in Clare of Assisi's writing. In her Second Letter to Agnes she speaks of traveling the path of prudent happiness,³⁹ inferring the necessity of learning how to compose and re-compose realities in which we are called to be faithful.

These virtues move persons to desire and to engage in dialogue. Contemplation, or discernment of faithfulness to the Gospel, and formation of one's conscience move a person to options and a plan of action in responding to a situation such as Vatican inquiries or any other flawed relationship in the church or our communities. The process will provide evidence of how it has strengthened us in the formative elements of reverencing the other, fidelity to the Gospel, and the common good.

The LCWR National Board purposefully declared on August 16, 2010:

The real gift to us is around the notions of solidarity and inclusivity. We have experienced a new, deep connection with one another and a sense of real communion as we live our way into new expressions of creative fidelity. We sense bonded en-

³⁸ Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., "The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality as a Context for Scotus's Moral Framework," in *The Ethical Method of John Duns Scotus: A Contribution to Roman Catholic Moral Theology, Spirit and Life* 3 (1993), 60-66, 87-87, 96. Cf. Scotus, *Ordinatio* I. 17, n. 62, V, 163. 13-164.4, 9-11.

³⁹ Clare of Assisi, *CA:ED*, 48.

"What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you do and not stop. But with swift pace, light step, unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir no dust, may you go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness, believing nothing, agreeing with nothing which would dissuade you from this commitment or would place a stumbling block for you on the way, so that nothing prevents you from offering your vows to the Most High in the perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you."

ergies and a radical openness to what is unfolding. We see ourselves as willing to wrestle with the chaos – perhaps in very public areas – cognizant of the possible cost of such discipleship.⁴⁰

God will not be silent as ecclesial tensions are negotiated. Rather than a static or servile obedience, creative fidelity can evidence itself by resisting caricatures and violence, by unyielding integrity and wrestling with our own transformation. Communities of discernment and dialogue can help open us to conversion and take us beyond noxious authoritarianism. In this way the diversity of a religious institute's gifts to the mission will be a public communal testimony to be the Word among complex social situations which cry for the beatitude life of God's reign.⁴¹ It was with this motivation that I turned to Cardinal Rodé in 2010 and asked for his blessing and, as well, permission to bless him. It was not easy for either of us, but I was compelled to create some beatitude life between us because it is inscribed on the heart of fidelity to be in communion with the church. The context for mutual blessing comes from the fact that we are created in the image of God. What we owe to others is profound reverence. A dynamic relationship of personhood means that we must give and receive from others, and faithfully follow Christ who is always on the way with us – truly present – to the full creativity of Trinitarian life.

⁴⁰ Leadership Conference of Women Religious, *Update* (Silver Spring, MD) (October 2010), 6.

⁴¹ Richard R. Galliardetz, *Contemporary Religious Life's Creativity to the Vision of Vatican II*, Address to LCWR General Assembly, August 12, 2010.

**RELEASING ENERGIES TO LOVE:
CREATIVE FIDELITY IN THE CHURCH**

JOSEPH P. CHINNICI, O.F.M.

THE SACRUM COMMERCIIUM

The ancient Franciscan text, *Sacrum Commercium*, written soon after the passing of the founder yet almost simultaneously with the struggle of Clare with some of the forces of the institutional Church, begins with Francis of Assisi [and in our imaginations we will add Clare herself, and all the penitents to our scene] scurrying about the streets and piazzas of central Italy seeking for “her whom his soul loved.” Echoing the *Canticle of Canticles*, the love song of the relationship between soul and God, God and Israel, the believer and the Church, Francis poses the question at every turn: “*Have you seen her whom my soul loves?*” (ScEx 3.3). He cannot find her; she is too elusive. And yet he is lost without her. “*Where does she eat? Where does she rest at noon, for I languish with love of her*” (ScEx 1.6, 2.5, 5.8). As the story goes on, Francis decides to seek the advice of the oldest and the wisest; they fail him, trapped as they are in the pride of their own riches. He eventually comes across two elderly people, “wasted away from great sorrow” (Lam 1.13). “Brother,” they tell him, “we have sat here for a time and for times and for half a time” (Deut 7.25, 12.7; Rev 12.14). We have frequently seen her pass by, and she has even gathered some companions; but she would always return, “weep bitterly and say, ‘The children of my mother have fought

against me (ScEx 1.5, Matt 18.26, Sg 1.3). And we said to her: “*Be patient, for the upright love you.*” “Brother, *she has now gone up to a great and high mountain where God has placed her*” (Rev 21.10, Matt 28.16). And so Francis set off on his journey up a very high and very difficult mountain in hopes of reaching a resting place from which he could see the whole world and everyone who is in it through the eyes of a God who is good. He was in search of peace; and a banquet will await him.

In today’s Church we have our own story to tell, we who seek for the one whom our hearts love. We have our own pilgrimage to undertake, our own high mountains to climb, our own obstacles to overcome. They are both similar and different to those of our founding generation. The letter I received one year ago identified some current concerns: “Especially reflect on the life of Francis and Clare pondering how they ‘obeyed the Pope’.” Many founders and foundresses experienced conflict with the bishop(s). “What are the deeper foundational faith dimensions that give these persons the tenacity to stay in the Church?” When you see things differently from the “prelate,” how “might we discern true obedience.” A later communication pinpointed the topic more succinctly in a very beautiful title: *Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church*. When the letter was written I am certain we did not foresee how timely the topic might be, and how nerve wracking. We all know that! As I try to explore these very difficult topics, let me try to do so in two major sections: First a little history; then some reflections, more extensive on how we might approach this from the viewpoint of our evangelical life.

HISTORY

Historical reflection thrives on metaphors, pictures if you like that can give us an insight into who we are and where we come from. They exist so that we can imagine

a path for our freedom to shape the future in a way that acknowledges that God works through time. In the present context, the metaphors I have chosen to capture the historical experience of our relationship with the Church come purposely from one of the classics of the American civil rights movement, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, published in April 1952. In this work, the narrator describes his journey into his own identity from growing up in the south to coming to full maturity in the north. The novel begins:

I am an invisible man. No. I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me.

The story, set a few years before the key phase of the civil rights movement, goes on to clarify two elements that I think are part of our own personal experience today: *Invisibility* and the ambiguities we inherit from our own past, what I will call, historically, *Vitamin Deficiencies*. “Invisibility,” I hope, will be self-explanatory. “Vitamin deficiencies” simply refers to weaknesses our collective social and ecclesial body inherits from its own participation in the history of our times. Let me take them in order and relate them to the notion of reform in the Church.

Invisibility and Reform

After I was elected provincial minister in June of 1988 I was asked to serve on the Priestly Life & Ministry Com-

mittee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. At that time, the previous committee had worked in the mid-1980s on two major reflections. First, from 1983-1985 it embarked on a joint study of "women religious and priests" developed through consultation with a representative group of people from the Bishops' Committee, women in pastoral leadership, LCWR leadership, and others. The areas of tension had been identified as touching different patterns of decision making and authority, depth of commitment to institutions, and ambiguous role expectations. "Human emotions," the *report* noted, "repressed for so long by structures – social and ecclesial – surfaced in uncomfortable, sometimes uncontrollable and on occasion even destructive ways." "The systemic inequality for the religious women – ritual, financial, ... and jurisdictional – impact at the local level." This study was followed by a pamphlet in 1988 on *The Morale of Priests*. It publicly identified the following litany of concerns: a feeling of being trapped, overworked and frustrated because of role expectations; the declining number of active priests; loneliness; issues of sexuality, sexual orientation, intimacy; differing ecclesiologies in which some felt the acute need for faster renewal, others were disillusioned and had begun to migrate, and still others mounted the "well organized opposition of the self-styled orthodox." [As an aside, I might add that the general description embedded in these two studies which deal with the situation of Church in the 1980s and its experiences of anger, loneliness, frustration, alienation, failures to communicate, mistrust – in short, the splitting of relationships – can now, some twenty years later through the progress of the abuse crisis, be applied to how many people view the hierarchy and perhaps to how some of them feel. But I digress.]

In this tense context, at one of our meetings, the members of the committee composed of seven or eight bishops and about nine consulters (non-voting members), of which I was one, sought the advice of a very well trained and extremely competent religious sister. She had worked

with priests and women religious for many years. How could some of these issues be addressed so as to avoid an ecclesial civil war, we asked? The sister gave us a very fine overview of the situation, its social and psychological roots, and several practical ways to address the divisions. At the end of her speech, the group politely thanked her and then went onto the next item on the agenda. There was no discussion. Towards the end of the meeting, the chair asked if there were any ideas which people wanted to bring up. I decided I would try an experiment. "Yes, I said, a few ideas have occurred to me." I then repeated, at times verbatim, five or six points which the sister had articulated in the morning session. The response I got has stuck in my mind ever since: "Those are really good ideas; we have never heard them before. Let's spend some time discussing them."

This is a difficult story, but I think it illustrates in a very sharp way the reality of *invisibility as a systemic and personal issue of great importance*. Here was a case of the invisibility caused by gender. We may be present at something; we may speak and contribute; but other people may not see, hear, or listen to us because of gender. We are silenced partners in our own demise. Many people I have talked to have told me that this is a common experience for women, either in the society or in the Church. For women religious this experience of **gender invisibility**, on the level of participation and organization, is even more pronounced because you dedicate your lives to the Gospel and the Church.

There are also many other areas in education, in ecclesiastical administration, and in society, where this **experience of invisibility** surfaces repeatedly. A few examples will communicate the reality and its pervasiveness.

There is such a thing as **status invisibility**: Analogous to gender invisibility, this operates in the experience of lay, i.e. non-ordained friars in a male fraternity. For example, I remember one experience of working on our leadership team where there were seven clerics and one lay brother. The secretary of the council was a priest.

Every time the lay brother spoke, the secretary put down his pen. The brother, a good friend of mine, pointed this out to me after several years on the council. I had never noticed it. So we worked out a deal. Every time he really wanted to contribute, he would call for a break, we would speak in the corridor, and when we returned I would come to the meeting and present his ideas – and the secretary would write them down! Not really satisfactory, but necessary – and at least we had each other. Lay friars, as you know, suffer from **status invisibility**, even while they share the same gender, as the Order continues to fight the imposition by the canonists of a clerical identity on the Order of Friars Minor. It becomes particularly difficult when the lay friar is trained at the same level as the priest and yet is forbidden to preach at a public eucharist. I got into an argument with a local ordinary over this one. I mentioned to him that he had the jurisdictional power to give permission for our lay friar to preach. “This will never happen in my diocese,” he argued. I stormed out of his office, slamming the door behind me. The status of the poor lay brother was once again reinforced. We obeyed the bishop and the friars made peace by inviting him to dinner. Storming out of an office and slamming a door is also not an action that I recommend! As another example, and speaking more generally, in this age of the laity, our own public status as religious is often invisible.

At times **gender invisibility** and **status invisibility** converge to make any situation even more painful. For women religious in the Church, this experience can come quite frequently. Even as a priest, I have experienced their convergence as, for example, when conducting a Christian Catholic liturgy in the midst of an overwhelmingly unchurched congregation. I can only imagine how it feels as a more consistent experience. In our present context and in the wake of the abuse scandal, as we reflect on so much ink spilled in a media which has its own agenda, we might ask if the bishops themselves do not feel in the public forum both **gender** and **status invisibility**?

There is also **positional invisibility**. This, oddly enough, cuts in multiple directions. As a leader in a religious community, we may find that our responsibilities often elude the grasp of many in the community. Our concerns are different than their's – sometimes wider, sometimes more fiduciary, sometimes more juridical. In many instances, we may have more confidential information. On the one hand, our own position isolates us from their sympathies, making us present but in some measure invisible to them. On the other hand, they themselves in many cases become invisible to us. But this is only one venue for positional invisibility. After I ceased to have the office of provincial, I returned to higher education and was asked to serve on multiple boards simply as a participant. Here, I found that even though I had experience, administrative history, and respect, I now had no classified position, no real “administrative or positional juice.” My position had changed to that of a subordinate – and public invisibility followed as night follows day. People would just not listen: they had position and I now did not. Often religious who serve on lay boards – and sisters have many experiences on the boards of hospitals, schools, and social service institutions – the “keepers of the charism” feel invisible as they try to communicate the incommunicable heart of their vision.

Cultural invisibility also occurs. Here the issue of race and ethnicity is very painful in our history. But let me expand the problem by simply asking a question. Isn't it our experience at times that the culture of religious life is in some measure invisible to the culture of married life? I have often wondered why amongst the friars, it is often the religious who are asked to take care of ageing parents. Is it because we are classified automatically as more compassionate, or because, we are seen as having more free time with fewer responsibilities? Certainly, one of the most intense experiences of cultural invisibility occurs when the spiritual culture of the Church and a religious order – focused on peace making, forgiveness, and restorative justice – comes face to face with a civil juridi-

cal culture focused on justice produced through litigation, fault finding, and criminal classification. They have public power, we do not. Reciprocal cultural invisibilities confront all of us in multiple dimensions of our life.

As a last example, I would like to mention **personhood invisibility** that occurs when the spiritual individual depths of a person, his or her wholeness, is swallowed up or subordinated to the communal mind and action of a group. A personal example: When I entered the Order of Friars Minor, Province of Saint Barbara, I was asked to put on “the mind of the province.” The only difficulty I had was that I could never locate this “mind”; its contours were elusive and seemed to change in some hidden way which I could not discern. I would zig and the collective mind would zag! Eventually, I came to the conclusion that the Province really was “mindless” – well, until I became provincial, and then the mind of the province once again became clear, at least to me! It was my turn to make others invisible. What I am trying to convey here is that when we join a group, any group – an ecclesial gathering, a professional group, an affinity cohort, a single gender association, or an organization shaped by what Mary Douglas calls a coherent “thought style,” we can at times experience **personhood invisibility**.

We live easily within the group that gives us life; we sit uneasily with its penchant for a “collective thought style,” its monochromatic demands. Public organizational consensus is often built on hidden presuppositions, established pathways, inherited prejudices, juridical classifications, cohorts of private people who control public speech, ways of feeling and behaving that are allowed or disallowed. And they make parts of our person invisible to the whole of our person. When we fall prey to this collective tendency to divide what for us is a living whole, we can even become invisible to ourselves. This is a particularly acute problem for practitioners of the evangelical life as we try to negotiate our identity in the contemporary world of market values and in a public Church which of necessity must emphasize its canonical structures.

Gender invisibility, status invisibility, positional invisibility, cultural invisibility, personhood invisibility – there are many other *dimensions of invisibility* beyond these that affect our lives, but you get the idea, I hope. None of these necessarily involve personal sin; they are simply embedded in the concrete patterns which shape our personal and collective relationships. All of these invisibilities are not particular to the Church but part of the fractured world in which we live. Yet, the truth is, we long with all our hearts to live and breathe where the whole of us is loved.

Paradoxically, as we shall see, the experience itself is an opportunity. It is the contemporary doorway into a few of the great insights of our evangelical spiritual, pastoral, and theological tradition. Coming as we did from a pre-conciliar Church that was settled in law and practice, we must learn from ecclesial experience Augustine's famous dictum at the heart of our own tradition: "Our hearts are restless, and restless ever shall they be until they rest in Thee." Our Lord Jesus knew invisibility himself: He came "unto his own and his own did not receive him" (John 1:10). "The foxes have dens, he says, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man, Christ, has nowhere to lay His head." Invisibility also forces us to come to grips on a spiritual level with Chapter VII of *Lumen Gentium*, the Church's pilgrim nature: "... the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect. However, until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons and daughters of God" (LG 48). We agree in our way of life to follow Christ. Where does his human journey end? As Clare interprets it, "Bowing his head, he gave up his spirit" (John 19.30). Were it not for invisibility, how else would we completely learn that ecclesial rest can occur only when God is "all in all" (1 Cor

15.28). Lastly, our experiences of invisibility enable us to share the lot of the poor. It is from within this complete evangelical truth that we are now called to release our energies to love.

Vitamin Deficiencies and Reform

Ralph Ellison describes how the Invisible Man carries around within himself the contradictions of his own history and the history of the African American community in the United States. Caught between the great promise of the Declaration of Independence and the collective experience of unfreedom, both before and after the civil war, the protagonist lives in a state of ambivalence. He feels within himself the “yes” and the “no” engendered by both the long history of slavery, the larger society, and even his own community. At one point he cries out: “I was caught between guilt and innocence, so that now they seemed one and the same.” He must squeeze from this experience a “lyricism of the blues.” We too inherit in our social body elements which are products of our own history that shape our current situation. The great historian of antiquity, Peter Brown, writes most insightfully: “The effect of a major breakthrough in the history of ideas is to block all alternative visions of the world. Thoughts that had been thought with dignity and profit for many centuries become unthinkable.... *And thus each epoch passes on to the next the intellectual and religious vitamin deficiencies created by its own, most distinctive achievements.*” Vitamin deficiencies, that is inherent weaknesses we carry around in our own social and ecclesial body simply because we are alive can only be understood when we begin with an act of thanksgiving.

An Act of Thanksgiving

We live in a religious world which has experienced a “major breakthrough in the history of ideas” and, I might add, in the history of organizational arrangements and

daily practice. We conveniently date this from the Second Vatican Council, and we are familiar in our language and experience with some of its major elements: full participation in the liturgy, the centrality of Scripture, the Church as the people of God, the *sensus fidelium*, collegiality, engagement with the world, the commitment to justice, the dignity of the person, the turn towards human rights, the liberation of those who are poor. And we know, as the Synod of 1971 put it, “while the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes.” In our own experience, this truth has been particularly applicable to the position of women in the Church: “We also urge,” the Synod put it, “that women should have their own share of the responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.”

As an historian and a religious I believe that a concrete experience of this “breakthrough in the history of ideas” also occurred in the charge by the Church to recover the vision of our founders. So many people pioneered a return to the sources in Francis, Clare, and our nineteenth century forebearers. Together we engaged in this rediscovery of the evangelical life. This twenty-five year process which began in 1967 came to a somewhat coherent organizational consensus in 1993 in preparation for the Synod on religious life. The Sisters and Brothers of the T.O.R. published “Response to the *Lineamenta*,” and noted that in contrast to the monastic and apostolic gift, our own tradition could be termed “evangelical,” albeit with reservations. Since that time many sisters and brothers have developed the theological and intellectual underpinnings of this tradition. Governmentally, during the same time, we were called upon to write our own constitutions, a task which took almost twenty years to complete: We learned self-governance. In ministry we pioneered work with the poor and mainstreamed the commitment to rights. We focused on personal dignity, participation, collegiality – and many of us experienced these breakthroughs as a

liberation from the past, a prophetic anticipation of the future, a new way of being Church. And I believe it has touched the experience, place, and contribution of women most directly, encouraging something parallel to and in reciprocal relationship to the women's movement of our times. It is analogous to the rediscovery of fraternity and the turn towards solidarity and justice amongst the friars. Can we not say that all of this was a movement of the Holy Spirit?

I hope we can remember that this process has not stopped. Despite short-term appearances, we as a whole Church are still "on pilgrimage," moving from God and towards God. The Holy Spirit is still working. This is the long view of the history of reform, and one of the first and most important steps is not to allow the Spirit to slip into the cracks caused by short term difficulties. In a culture where memory is at a premium, we need to appropriate our own development of the evangelical life even more deeply. We can do this, I think, by practicing a prophetic action that I would like to name: *the prophetic action of the affirmation of the good*. We have all been participants in something very good and we can for ourselves recite what has, in fact, been accomplished and where in fact it came from. In this way, our memory, the doorway to identity, constructs a truthful world of gratitude which stands unique in a culture of forgetfulness. This starting point of gratitude is a sign of the Holy Spirit. The issue here is not what we would like to see happen, but how, within the context of our ecclesial communion and in obedience to Church teaching, the whole people of God and we ourselves have in fact moved forward.

We know our deficiencies only because we have already tasted the Holy Spirit. This is a good Augustinian principle. Yet I know from my own experience that so often I cannot take this prophetic action of the affirmation of the good, this stance of gratitude, simply because I have allowed the "cares and concerns of this world" to blot out the fact that breakthroughs themselves and my own dear life are always subject to the "law of the incar-

nation” and “law of the redemption.” Let me say a word about each.

The Law of the Incarnation

Every great breakthrough moves beyond the past; in fact, it makes the thinking and acting of the past “impossible.” Yet, at the same time, the breakthrough carries the past with it and if it is really to establish a “handing on” a “tradition” it must establish continuity with this inheritance. Breakthroughs-become-tradition must receive the past’s wisdom, integrate themselves into a larger institutional whole, and develop ever so slowly a new, more penetrating but still recognizable form of human, Christian, Catholic, and Franciscan life. This organic process is like a new seed planted in a larger forest, taking nutrients from all the soil and the air, and then breaking through hard crust to sprout above the ground. To find the light and fully blossom the new saplings will have to seek the openings in the canopy of the larger trees that give them protection, shade, and moisture. At times, those openings can be very small. Yet without the canopy the sapling will not survive nor last through the winter. This was the life of Francis with Bishop Guido, Cardinal Hugolino, the canonists, the difficult hierarchy of his day, and the Church of his time; it was the life of Clare with Pope Gregory IX; it was the life of Bonaventure with the secular masters and bishops who wished to dissolve the Order.

In finding a way that made room for the concrete expression of their evangelical life, our founders and foundresses entered into public obedience to the Roman Church and injected into this situation the new life of the Spirit. They established a very difficult religious tradition within the Great Tradition. All of them knew well a disjunction between the sacramental and communal-hierarchical structure of the Church and the sanctity of the members who made up the whole Body of Christ. This Body of Christ in their minds and spirits was always in

need of healing. They also knew that the Church was the “custodian of the Incarnation”: in the sacraments, the creed, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the priesthood of all believers, authoritative teaching, ecclesiastical office, the Word of God. Their task, they discovered, in their pilgrimage through time was to make abundantly clear and visible to others that the mystery of Christ and the bond of charity was the heart of the matter. “Enter through the narrow gate,” the Scriptures told them. At the time, it was a very narrow gate indeed, one that passed between the gaze of those who made them invisible and the assertion of their own dignity. They chose to go public with a triadic formula: Gospel-Tradition-Catholicity.

We have in our own iconography a beautiful symbol of this process: The Portiuncula is a very small church that engendered a whole new revitalization of the Christian Catholic community. Originally, it was an abandoned Church that still housed the mystery of the Incarnation. We visit it on pilgrimage, we pray in its small space, we experience its peace, we pray before its eucharist, we see the dying Francis whom it sheltered and the brothers and sisters who gathered around it. We know the story of the fire set by Francis and Clare that could be seen throughout the countryside. Yet, the Portiuncula survives the ravages of time and we are able to draw strength from it only because it is protected, encompassed, stabilized, and to some extent even shaped and shadowed by the larger Basilica of the Great Church. This is the reality of an ecclesial community in time subject to the law of the Incarnation.

The Law of the Redemption

The new spiritual growth receives both vitality and also vitamin deficiencies from the ground in which it is planted and the environment in which it grows. Organic Gospel growth is also a process of supplementing our deficiencies. For two reasons. First, tradition-making is challenging because the breakthroughs, born of the Spir-

it and fueled by love, as we have seen, always produce for those who carry them experiences of invisibility. In fact, only those who love greatly in word and deed can experience invisibility so deeply, especially from the eyes of those who cannot see their persons. This experience itself is accompanied by internal and external struggles over power and control between the world people have received and the world they wish to create. Second, the breakthroughs themselves, no matter how lofty or intentionally pure, because of their incarnation in time and culture carry within their own bodies hidden forces for invisibility, vitamin deficiencies, that poison the roots of a living Tradition and push it towards its own self-destruction. For example, planted in the soil of a post-conciliar American Church, our breakthroughs at times have forgotten how actions in our own Church can influence communities of belief in other local churches. Yet we live in a global world. Evangelical breakthroughs, unless they practice poverty and humility, make other people invisible. They must follow not only the Law of the Incarnation but also the Law of the Redemption. They must recognize their own poverty; they must become brothers and sisters of penance.

The real deficiencies that such a situation produces play out not simply in the realm of ideas – theoretically everything can fit together, either on the right or on the left: hierarchy and community, personal integrity and positional authority, individual rights and collective duties, new breakthroughs and continuity with the tradition. Just make your choice: to the right or to the left, please. The more intractable poverties play out on another level. Why is it that the studies I mentioned above, those dealing with the relationships between men and women in the Church, those dealing with the priests, and now our observations and felt knowledge about the hierarchy and perhaps their's about us, all point to an emotional fracturing at a very deep level of the forces for communion between brothers and sisters of the same Body of Christ? We need not judge it; we need just to see it. It parallels

the weaknesses found in our society. As James Davison Hunter describes, we live in a culture that reduces public life to political life, privileges grievances, speaks in negotiations, works by action groups, and legitimates the will to power. Reflecting as an historian who is a Franciscan, I think the real danger in this situation is to leave the analysis at the level of an intellectual argument – resolution will occur then only in a struggle over whose public power can make the other most invisible. The real vitamin deficiencies instead lay in the realm of the affections. All we need do is look at our own experience.

The forces that make me invisible leave their mark; they wound in all directions and admitting them makes me vulnerable. These forces derail my energies to love by tempting them to settle with disappointment, frustration, isolation, suspicion, anger, the hubris of control, totalism; once settled, even institutionalized in patterns of organizational rhetoric, my affective home builds its foundation on apathy, indifference, withdrawal, subversion, migration into an enclave of self-reference; finally, a violent wind comes that reduces others to invisibility and my own home to rubble. The result: A loss of the pearl of great price: my stance of the prophetic affirmation of the good; my very self made in the image of God, male and female in the image of God; my internal catholicity or wholeness completely filled with dignity and energies to love; my identity as a human being amongst human beings called to communion with my-self, my neighbor, my present, my past, my future, all creatures, great and small, my God who became a human being for me and who looks on all things and says that they are “very good,” communion within my very human Church. Our vitamin deficiencies affect our ability to sing our collective *Canticle of Creatures*.

Theologically, vitamin deficiencies create bodily openings for the denial of the Incarnation and the Redemption. Once recognized, however, they can be turned towards the good. Crucified wounds become openings in resurrected bodies. In this situation, I am very hopeful. Why?

**THE EVANGELICAL LIFE ENGAGES INVISIBILITY
AND CREATES A LIVING TRADITION**

In Ralph Ellison's novel, the *Invisible Man*, we could say the modern man or woman, emerges from the trap of his or her own invisibility and becomes free only when he or she recognizes it, not as the whole but as part of the human experience. In the embrace of this necessity, a person discovers the possibility of action. "I condemn and affirm," the protagonist proclaims at the end. "Say no and say yes, say yes and say no. I denounce because though implicated and partially responsible, I have been hurt to the point of abysmal pain, hurt to the point of invisibility. And I defend because in spite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to love." And so, in the recognition of the human condition, the energies for life and social responsibility are released. What emerges from the mouth is a lyricism of the blues that creates a new song for the world. Beauty enters the stage; I have to love if I am to be free.

For ourselves, we have a tradition very akin to this "lyricism of the blues" when it comes to the institutional Church. Embracing the Gospel and rooted deeply in the vitality of an evangelical reform, we experience ambivalence and are aware of the people of God's complicity in the patterns that create invisibility. This knowledge "begets sorrow," as Bonaventure writes. Yet in our tradition it is the grace of a sorrow that produces not sadness or laziness but hopeful action and ends in a "yes" to the Church and the world. It issues in beatitude. Love not loved cries over the loss of salvation; and the tears wash away the anger and produce the freedom to love again in the pilgrimage of life in the Church. Let me identify, in complement to Sister Marlene's presentation, how this process works in the evangelical life and how, when embraced, it acts for change. In this year of her centenary I will use St. Clare as a prime example, simply summarizing the major points: vision, task, temptations, method.

Vision

The *Legend of Saint Clare* contains two stories of the confrontation between Clare and the “angel of darkness,” “the devil.”

Once in the depth of night, while she was sleeping, an angel of darkness stood by her in the form of a black child and warned her, saying: “You should not cry so much because you will become blind. But when she replied immediately: “Whoever sees God will not be blind,” he departed confused. That same night, after Matins, while Clare was praying, bathed as usual in a stream [of tears], the deceitful admonisher approached. “You should not cry so much,” he said, “otherwise your brain will dissolve and flow through your nose because you will have a crooked nose.” To which she responded quickly: “Whoever knows the Lord suffers nothing that is twisted.” Immediately he fled and vanished.

One time in fact, while she was praying None in her little cell, the devil struck her on the cheek, filled her eye with blood and her cheek with a bruise.

The first temptation occurs in the night, when all is dark; it reappears again at cock-crow, just before the dawn; the second, during the heat of the day. In both passages, Clare is crying. In fact, tears run throughout her *Legend*. Clare spills “torrents of tears” after Compline; she “taught the novices to weep”; she wept herself during the hours of Sext and None, the hours of the Lord’s crucifixion and death. She “sorrowed” at the sufferings of others. In this context she learned “the Office of the Cross” as Francis “had established it.” We have to ask: why was she weeping all the time? Is this simply affective prayer hidden from the public because she so strongly identified with the crucified Christ? I think not. We need to understand her vision of the Church.

Clare is too much a student of the Gospels and St. Paul, she has too great a grasp of the Incarnation and Redemption, not to know that the dwelling place of Christ crucified is his mystical Body on earth. The foundational

ecclesiological reality for Clare is not the famous texts of Acts (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37), nor the giving of the keys to Peter (Matt 16:18), nor the contemporary “binding and loosening” given to all (Matt 18:18), passages that are certainly important but that history has shown are easily capable of politicization. Her key passage, as for Francis, was the Lord extending his hands to all of his disciples, despite their roles and different gifts, saying: “There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me” (Matt 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, Luke 8:19-21). The Word dwells in the hearts of individuals making them members of the same family of God, creating amongst them a familial exchange capable of birthing Christ. In the Gospels, the same reality is captured by other phrases: “He who welcomes you welcomes me, and he who welcomes me welcomes him who sent me” (Matt 10:40). “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers [or sisters] of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). “‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ‘Who are you, sir?’ ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’” (Acts 9:5-6). Underneath Clare’s ecclesiological vision lies a focus on the Pauline metaphors of the Body of Christ in time (Eph 4:1-16, 1 Cor 12:4-31): “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be ... can the head say to the feet I do not need you? ... You then are the Body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it” (1 Cor 12:17-27). She writes to Agnes: “I consider you a co-worker of God himself and a support of the weak members of his ineffable Body.”

Clare’s ecclesiological gaze informed by faith is horizontal towards brothers and sisters in all directions. She has actually seen Christ suffering and being persecuted in the Body of his members (*Legend*, 21; *Process of Canonization*, III.7). She has experienced the “detraction and murmuring, dissension and division” within her own community (*Rule*, 10:6). She has in fact been kicked in the mouth in her own monastery (*Process*, II:3). In herself, she has known fear, anger, disturbance, bitterness, care and anxiety (*Rule*, 9:5, 10:6). She has observed the

friars in their internal divisions and escapes from their vocation. Her life has bled in the wake of Francis's lonely plea for her fidelity (*Last Will*). She has sorrowed at the news that Agnes of Prague has been in a "yes" and "no" relationship with the papacy. She has been made to bear a title she did not want (abbess, *Process I.6 Legend 12*) and her own fragility has frustrated her desires for martyrdom (*Process VI.6, VII.2*). She in her God-given personhood has been made "invisible" by the actions of the pope and his curia, by bishops and friars, not once, not twice, but for almost the entire lifetime of her journey. The Christ crucified she embraced was not the cloistered one in San Damiano but the one living in herself and in her sisters and brothers in the Church and in the world. She knew the poverty of Christ's ecclesial body first hand.

Task

Both Clare and Francis intuited that they were called to heal the Church's disordered affectivities. Their task became the injection into the stable and warring structures of the Body of Christ the way of life and concrete practice of *a medicinal ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity*. And lest this project be identified as one without intellectual content (as has been done so consistently in our tradition) we must remember that Francis, Clare, Bonaventure and others used all the powers of their minds, all the theological resources available to them, and all of their knowledge of spiritual practices and judicial interpretation to argue publicly for this *medicinal ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity*. Its technical ascetic pathway was "living without anything of one's own" and it needed to penetrate every dimension of the Church: its style of leadership, its mode of decision making, its exercise of power, its patterns of relationships, its public presence to the world. We can see this work of her life unfolding as she argued and pleaded for her *Rule of Life*, creatively filling old monastic and canonical categories with the new wine of poverty and humility,

ministerial service, sororal and fraternal care, and charity. Bonaventure will later note that when the Vicar of Christ “accepted with joy as a gift from heaven this state of life of the poor who preach the Gospel and were to care for the salvation of souls[.], he favored it with kindness ... Thus he mercifully provided for the salvation of souls, and, without prejudice to the authority of the popes, he adorned the hierarchy of the Church without disorganizing it.”

And lest this project be confined to the realm of sentimentality, the heart, and a “soft asceticism” – as Gregory IX once labeled Clare’s *forma vitae* “a milk drink” rather than “solid food” – we might recall that precisely because an ecclesial vision of the whole Body of Christ – a grace from above – burned in Clare’s heart, she loved more deeply, knew invisibility more profoundly, and wept more profusely. The humiliating temptations came perhaps, as the *Legend* coded it, from the “angel of darkness” and the “devil,” but the abetting instruments and the occasions were the patterns of invisibility which marked the human beings, the pope, the bishops, the priests, the men and women who were co-members of Christ’s Body. She could not be dissuaded from communion with this whole body.

Temptations

In the *Legend* these experiences of invisibility came so strongly that blood filled Clare’s eyes. That is, she could no longer see. But sight and faith were deeply related in her world and in the world of her teacher. Could she see the image of God in the disfigured Body of her Lord? Could she see its disfigurement and still believe in God’s presence among men and women in the Church? She learned to come to the Church through faith in God’s creative, incarnate and redemptive love. She learned to see the Church in faith through the energy-light radiating from God’s loving gaze. It is no wonder that just a few decades later in more technical language Bonaventure would argue that faith in the crucified, the disfigured body of the

Word become flesh, stabilizes the affections enabling us to see with the eye of the heart. Clare also feared her brain would turn to mush and run out her nose: that is, in her confusion, clarity, that wonderful gift of the intellect that is able to distinguish the angel of light from the angel of darkness and perform a prophetic action to affirm the good was in danger of dissolving. Struck on the cheek, her face became wounded; that is, shame and guilt entered into her heart when she looked in the mirror. And if she stayed on this journey of the evangelical life, the devil argued, in her dear self she would no longer be beautiful but ugly. She would be reduced to “nothing.” On a very practical level Clare’s task became not simply to inject into the Church a form of life that was medicinal for the affections but also to resist the temptations that accompanied her journey.

Such was the ecclesiological vision, its historical task, and its temptations that played out in Francis and Clare. I might add that this same vision, task, and accompanying temptations have been handed down to us, if we read them in their “lower frequencies” (as Ellison would say), not just in the lives of the founding generation but also in the lives and faith of our own mothers, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297), Francis Bachmann (1824-1863), Ignatius Hayes (1823-1894), Alfred Moes (1828-1898), Maddelena Bentivoglio (1834-1905), and countless others.

Method

It is important to recognize at this point that the clarity of this vision and the demands it makes on contemporary believers is even more difficult perhaps than it was for Francis, Clare of Assisi, and our nineteenth century predecessors. Yves Congar pointed out over eighty years ago that the institutional Church itself in its bearing and actions in the modern world could easily become one of the great causes of unbelief: “It was clear to me that, insofar as it depended on us, the cause of unbelief was

largely related to a poor presentation of the church, to a not very attractive, even repulsive, appearance, one that was wholly juridico-hierarchical. Something would have to change.” Even since he wrote these words, the situation has become more complex, the power of organizational life more pronounced. We now know more about the politics of the Church – its patronage system, its economic entanglements, its bureaucratic tendencies – than did Francis and Clare; we see with more acute eyes the long tradition of invisibility, particularly for women. Today, our communications networks and the culture of images intensify our knowledge of the Church’s faults and feed our intuitive negation; the focus on the following of Christ becomes lost in the very evident fog of ecclesial culture wars; and the truth is we no longer possess the institutional supports the saints enjoyed. And still it is our turn. How then can we become visible? How can we use our freedom to employ the tools Sr. Marlene is giving us and become a living tradition within a Great Tradition. We must act. As the protagonist in *Invisible Man* proclaims: “Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled ‘file and forget,’ and I can neither file nor forget.”

I have already noted the importance of framing exactly what our vision is and the very substantial advances that have been made. While being clear-sighted about the problems, we must commit ourselves to the **prophetic action of the affirmation of the good**. We need to begin by answering the question: What do we receive from the Church, the “custodian of the Incarnation.” We need each other to do that; and we need to appropriate with clarity the breakthroughs mentioned above.

I want to conclude by planting a small seed in the current desert – but it is an evangelical seed which contains great and long-lasting power because it comes from the Spirit, who is the gift between the Father and the Son. We must never be afraid of small actions done through faith in union with our God. “I am the vine, you are the branches ... My Father has been glorified in your bear-

ing much fruit and becoming my disciples” (John 15:5, 8). The ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity necessitates a concerted effort to establish mediating structures where bishops, priests, religious, and laity can begin to see each other. Sisters and brothers, we are meant to be saved by each other. Our ecclesiology necessitates becoming “subject to all creatures” through actions filled with charity. A confrere of mine once defined the Franciscan life in these terms: It is not a Franciscan action if you cannot perform it over lunch with your friends and your enemies. These actions can range all the way from an invitation to or from a local deanery, a spontaneous invitation to a bishop, an offer of a free space for conflict resolution, a catechetical program, a personal visit, a conversation with someone injured – all of which you already do – to an invitation to someone more powerful to accompany us and intercede for us in our present circumstances.

The ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity presupposes the daily practice of personal and communal lamentation through which the tears of our prayers and the intercession of the passion of Christ act as medicine for the healing of our hearts. In retrospect, we must seriously ask why Francis and then Clare adopted the *Office of the Passion* as a daily prayer – was it not to handle the daily invisibilities inflicted on their souls and bodies? Let’s drop in on *Sext* and *None*, listening not to the words of Francis and Clare but, as they did, to the words of Jesus himself in the time of his passion:

On the path where I walked/
the proud hid a trap for me.
I have no means of escape/
there is no one who cares for my life.
I have born abuse because of you/
and confusion covers my face.
I have become an outcast to my brothers/
a stranger to the children of my mother.
Holy Father, zeal for your house has consumed me...

They rejoiced and united together against me,
Blows were heaped on me and I knew not why.
They looked and stared at me/
they divided my garments among them/
they cast lots for my tunic

In the last analysis, it is the passion of Christ himself that releases our energies to love. The prayer of *None* (vs. 11-13) ends with Jesus proclaiming: "I have slept and risen, and my most holy Father has received me with glory. Holy Father, you held my right hand, led me with your counsel, and have taken me up with glory. For what is there in heaven for me and what do I want on earth besides you." Through Christ's intercession, through him who "in the days when he was in the flesh, offered prayers and supplications with loud tears to God, who was able to save him from death" (Hebr 5:7), we hear again the voice of the beloved, we see again the presence of our God in the condition of being human. He has poured his Spirit into our hearts (Rom 5:5). We do belong to God, to ourselves, to each other. Love is with us. Our own history is not lost in the fog of war.

It is true. The actions may appear to be simple: the prophetic affirmation of the good; the small gesture of affectivity; the daily lamentation. But in them, moving forward, we climb the mountain, we share the banquet, we accompany brothers and sisters. And in the presence of Christ we survey the world and our tiny little Church in it. "They showed her all the world they could see," the early text reads, and as the brothers and sisters surrounded Lady Poverty, they looked out upon all that is, including the Church, and said: "This, Lady, is our cloister." It is the *sacrum commercium* and we are free to love again.

**SEEKING HIS KINGDOM:
THE ROLE OF FOOD IN MY RELIGIOUS LIFE**

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“So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides” Matthew 6:31,33.

Have you ever stopped to think about how much of Jesus’ teaching and ministry took place within the context of food and eating? His first miracle was to turn water into wine to enhance a meal. Dining with sinners was a symbol of his mission. The Institution of the Eucharist – which involves eating and drinking – took place after a meal with the Apostles. He even asked his witnesses, “Have you anything here to eat?” when he arose from the dead. Food played a prominent role in the life of Jesus as he sought his Father’s kingdom.

Two thousand years later, food has a prominent role in American society. The airwaves, including Catholic television stations, are filled with cooking shows. When recounting about a sacramental occasion such as a wedding, the description usually includes details about what was for dinner. I heard one television announcer recently say something to the effect of, “What could be more American than a hot-dog eating contest on the Fourth of July?”

Prior to joining the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn in September 2006, I never consciously considered the role of food in Jesus’ life or my life. Food had a role in

my life – I just had never thought about it. Reflecting for this article revealed that I had developed specific values pertaining to food.

These values were formed at an early age by my humble parents. Mom and Dad were instrumental in teaching me to share food within our family of seven so each could receive what was needed. Meals were at set times – there was an expectation to be at the table promptly, unless working or ill. Meals always started with prayer. Mom and Dad also used food to teach me priorities. If I wanted to participate in Sunday or holiday dinners, the prerequisite was attending Mass. Celebration of the Eucharistic Meal always took priority.

As my self-awareness heightened during the Formation process in becoming a Brother – from Candidate to Novice to Temporary Professed – so did my understanding of the role of food in my Religious Life. It was during the second year of Candidacy that I began to become conscious of this role.

At that time, I was asked to compile a reflection of the joys and challenges of being a Candidate. One of the challenges I encountered was multiple food choices, such as various types of breads which were available for the many Brothers with whom I was living. Living alone for many years, I had become used to limited choices. I started to internally indict the Brothers for having too many choices, thinking it was a violation of their Vow of Poverty.

Fortunately, my Candidacy Director instructed me to stop looking in the breadbox and start looking in the mirror to see where I could live more simply. Although this advice was helpful in concentrating on my own behavior, it did not answer questions about food which had started to permeate my daily life, including, “Why do I eat?” and “What is the role of food in my Religious Life?”

During my Novitiate year, I attended an Intercommunity Novitiate Program, where I raised these questions. The instructor explained that some Religious in the United States during the past several years had in the area of food moved – not intentionally but subconsciously –

toward the growing culture of consumerism with an emphasis on individual preferences. She mentioned that she would not be surprised to learn that, at a few provincial houses, the number of beverages, e.g., coffees, teas, milk, iced teas, juices, sodas, available during dinner would total thirty, forty or more, without house members recognizing this quantity.

It was upon Professing First Vows in August 2009 that I discovered just how easy it was to slide subconsciously into a mentality of food preferences. I found myself being ungrateful that we were having iceberg lettuce instead of romaine and grumbling because I had to settle for instant pudding instead of my favorite tapioca. I concluded that, if I was going to seek the kingdom of God with a single heart, I needed to speak with other Religious to frame the role of food in my Religious Life.

My discussions revealed that eating is not about consumption, but about opportunity. First, it is an opportunity to be thankful for the gifts we are receiving from God. Food is a fruit of the earth and blessing from God. The standard grace before meals includes the phrase, "... and these Thy gifts from Thy bounty ..." this acknowledgement of food as a gift that we receive from God can and should impact behavior. As a Novice, I was introduced to the beautiful practice of thanking God after the meal, something I never considered doing.

Second, eating provides a chance to be mindful about the holiness and sacredness of food, and its sacramental aspect. Much of what we eat was once alive. Food is meant to be shared so that it can nourish and sustain us as we share Christ's love. Food is not an end but a means to an end, namely, the nutrition to do God's work. When I think in this manner, I savor every bite, my consumption decreases, and sharing of Christ's love increases.

Eating is an opportunity to build community. The focus should not be on sitting and eating, but on sitting and eating together. Meal conversation should be different than other conversation. Eating must be a time for me to come not only with an open stomach and mouth,

but with open ears and heart to listen to the joys and challenges of my Brothers.

Food is a means by which to make amends. Jesus was very incarnational and taught that body and soul are one. Just as unity is strengthened when praying together, something happens when eating together. What better setting than over a meal to reconcile with another? If I am angry with someone, I look for an opportunity to resolve differences over a meal.

The struggle with balancing daily demands and communal meals is very real even in Religious Life. I have become more cognizant about ministry and other activities cutting into times reserved for eating. Through hunger, God naturally invites me to stop and eat – I am now conscious about taking full advantage of His invitation.

To build community, the setting for the meal is vitally important. It needs to be at a table which has been set, not a space cluttered with a computer or newspapers, or in front of a television. In our Friary, a Brother gets up extra early to set dinner places for as many as fifteen before starting his day. When I come down to breakfast and see the settings, it gives me a feeling of peace to know that – regardless of what the day may bring – I will reunite with my Brothers for dinner.

To my surprise, I discovered through my conversations that eating is an opportunity to live social justice. Food provides many ways to compassionately see and respond to the distressed face of Christ, including:

Being Mindful of Where Shopping: Investing shopping dollars in companies known for treating workers fairly and producing foods using environmentally-safe practices is a natural extension of the Gospel. Consider spending more to invest in human health and a healthy environment.

Reusing Bags: Rather than throwing out shopping bags, reuse them or give them to a nearby soup kitchen to use for the hungry and homeless.

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Supporting Local Growers: Instead of purchasing food shipped from hundreds and thousands of miles away, why not buy what is grown in the area? More money will support farmers rather than distributors, and a shorter traveling distance will reduce the fuel and emissions associated with the food eaten.

Renewing Abstinence from Meat: U.S. reliance on factory farming of animals has devastating environmental and human health impacts. Connect abstinence with awareness and learn more about sustainable agriculture.

Laboring with Love: Preparing meals for one's community can be an expression of love. Growing or raising food and purchasing whole foods rather than processed products will connect more directly to the goodness of created matter, reduce packaging waste, and save money! Many food banks accept home-grown donations.

Participating in Food Day: Please refer to sidebar.

Becoming aware of these ways to live social justice has changed my behaviors related to food. I am conscious about eating less meat and more vegetables. I started a "roof garden" containing lettuce, tomatoes and other edible plants. I recommended that our Friary eat more simply on Food Day, with the money saved donated to a charity to purchase Thanksgiving meals for the less fortunate.

As a twenty-first century Religious, I am called to be a radical witness to the Gospel and live counter-culturally. By seizing the opportunities that eating provides, I can best utilize food for the purpose God intended – to seek His kingdom!

Food Day Sidebar

While compiling this article, I coincidentally received emails pertaining to Food Day. Organized by The Center

for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), Food Day is a renewed campaign to engage thousands of people across the country and change the way Americans think about their food.

To learn about Food Day, I contacted Christine Elliott, Director of Care for Creation for the Franciscan Action Network (FAN) and a postulant with the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist (FSE). Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus, and the example of Francis and Clare, FAN is a collective Franciscan voice seeking to transform U.S. public policy related to peacemaking, care for creation, poverty and human rights. Christine explained that CSPI and partner organizations have identified October 24 as Food Day; related events take place on or around this date.

Christine described the intention of Food Day to foster conversation and action around five principles to improve the food system in the United States:

- Promote safer, healthier diets
- Support sustainable and organic farms
- Reduce hunger
- Reform factory farms to protect the environment and animals
- Support fair working conditions for food and farm workers

Christine mentioned that Religious can participate in Food Day in many ways. Food Day is a valuable opportunity to reflect internally on how the values of the Congregation apply to the U.S. food system and to reach out to share these values with others. Through the Food Day website (www.foodday.org), one can find and attend a local event; alternatively, Congregations could host an event and invite others to join. For example, some Congregations have hosted film screenings or workshops on gardening and cooking. For more information regarding FAN, please visit www.franciscanaction.org.

RETRIEVING FRANCISCAN PHILOSOPHY FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

KEITH DOUGLASS WARNER, O.F.M.

Departing from the monastic spirituality of his day, Francis opted to live and preach the Gospel in the public realm. Franciscans ever since have been giving witness to God's love by their practical works of service to the poor and marginalized, and by preaching conversion to all. Many men and women are drawn to Franciscan spirituality today by the intuitive sense that following Jesus should be practiced, at least in part, in public.

However, exclusively relying on intuition constrains one's ability to preach the Gospel broadly, beyond personal relationships. The very foundations of justice, human rights and environmental stewardship are openly debated in society with little, if any, wisdom. Franciscans can and should demonstrate that our social outreach and advocacy is rooted in a theological and philosophical tradition that is vigorous, coherent, pastoral, practical and rooted in the Gospel. In this way, Franciscan social engagement will be more firmly anchored in the wisdom of our tradition yet also open to innovative solutions as yet untried.

Social philosophy is the philosophical study of human social behavior, societal institutions, and social ethics. It investigates how people relate to each other in and through society through institutions such as governments, economic markets, and laws. It shares much with social science disciplines, but as a branch of applied philosophy, it incorporates ethics and values.

Franciscan social philosophy is a vision of how broader society could live out the ideals of St. Francis. As the primitive Franciscan movement evolved into an influential institution in medieval Europe, its members confronted the need to communicate their ideals beyond those in vowed or secular Franciscan life. Leading thinkers in Franciscan philosophy reflected in depth on the fundamental character of economics in light of their vow of poverty, and of the common good in light of their commitment to fraternity. Scholarship in this field has expanded significantly the understanding of the many remarkable contributions made by Franciscan thinkers to medieval European society. This academic scholarship holds significant promise for guiding the Franciscan social project into the twenty-first century, including our broader educational and communication ministries.

This essay, after providing more context on the retrieval of Franciscan social philosophy, presents three studies of Franciscan philosophers and their social projects: Peter John Olivi and his examination of the moral status of the merchant in light of Franciscan poverty; Bernardino da Siena, Bernardino da Feltre and the Observant Reform as they preached a Franciscan vision of business ethics and of practical initiatives to help the poor; and Francesc Eiximenis who articulated a political economic philosophy that was highly influential on the Iberian peninsula for centuries. It concludes by proposing actions to enhance scholarly retrieval efforts and the integration of wisdom with praxis.

FRANCISCAN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The retrieval of our Franciscan intellectual tradition is an exciting development because it can help draw from the best of our tradition and inspire us to manifest more clearly a Franciscan spirit in the world today. To date, most attention to retrieval has been focused on theology at the university of Paris in the thirteenth century. By

expanding the focus of retrieval to include philosophy, other regions, and later periods, we may learn surprising – and potentially inspiring – lessons from Franciscan thinkers about how they applied Gospel values to the social problems.

Franciscan philosophy is one current within Catholic philosophy, but it is quite distinct from contemporary forms of academic philosophy. Drawing from the Incarnation, it is integral, linking knowledge, love and embodied praxis. As St. Bonaventure wrote, “There are some dimensions of wisdom that relate to our intellect, others that relate to our desires, and others that are to be lived out. Therefore, wisdom ought to take possession of the entire person, that is with respect to the intellect, the affective life, and the person’s action.”¹ Thus, Franciscan philosophy should help one apply wisdom to all these dimensions of our humanity.

Franciscan philosophy can provide a foundation for wisdom, ethics, and spirituality that expresses our Gospel vision for society. In the spirit of the Incarnation, Franciscan social philosophy has a bias toward public praxis. Retrieving Franciscan social philosophy offers additional examples of Franciscans engaged in the societies of their times, and this can shed light on efforts in our own time. This essay invites advocates of justice and peace to study and reflect on the thought and social commitments of prior Franciscan social philosophers, any parallels between social engagement then and now, and the potential for drawing lessons from the past to make contemporary social engagement efforts more robust. It also invites any who might see Franciscan engagement in contemporary political and economic institutions as novel to reconsider that view in light of these examples from our history.

There is a significant body of contemporary scholarship, chiefly by Europeans, that has investigated

¹ Bonaventure, “Sermon on the Kingdom of God II,” in Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., trans., *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 34.

the relationship between Franciscan philosophy and praxis, and medieval merchants, markets, and political institutions. Much of this scholarship is in Italian, French, and Catalan. Scholars have investigated the history of the idea of a “civil economy” that deals with the relationship between markets and society in an ethical framework.² This research has described the significant contributions of Franciscan philosophers to the formulation of the late medieval civil economy, especially as they understood reciprocal relationships in society, justice in contracts and exchange, and the positive contributions of entrepreneurship.³ Some scholars have gone as far as to describe a Franciscan economics (more accurately, a distinctly Franciscan economic philosophy).⁴ The retrieval of the Franciscan intellectual tradition has just begun its work in the subjects of economics and politics.⁵ Although this article is a popularization, it includes more bibliographic information than typical for *The Cord* in the hope of stimulating additional study, reflection, research and networking. As the Franciscan family considers

² Two notable works in English are Luigino Bruni and Stefano Zamagni, *Civil Economy: Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), and Daniel Finn, ed., *The True Wealth of Nations: Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³ See Giacomo Todeschini, *Franciscan Wealth: From Voluntary Poverty to Market Society*, trans. Michael F. Cusato O.F.M., Jean François Godet-Calogeras (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009), and Stefano Zamagni, “Catholic Social Thought, Civil Economy, and the Spirit of Capitalism,” in Finn, *True Wealth*, 63-94.

⁴ See chapters titled “Franciscan Economics” in Odd Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools: Wealth, Exchange, Value, Money and Usury According to the Paris Theological Tradition, 1200-1350* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1992), and Todeschini, “Franciscan Economics and Jews in the Middle Ages,” in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Susan E. Myers and Stephen J. McMichael (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 99-117.

⁵ But see *Poverty and Prosperity: Franciscans and the Use of Money*, *Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009), and *Greed, Lust and Power: Franciscan Strategies for Building a More Just World Money*, *Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010).

our core values of justice, dignity and common good in the context of widespread failure of public and private institutions, we may be able to access inspiration and wisdom from our tradition to guide our engagement with society.

**A COUNTERINTUITIVE APPROACH:
ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY BASED ON POVERTY**

The Franciscan movement has a vexed relationship with money, rooted in Francis's own contempt for it and his insistence on rigorous forms of poverty for his followers. Debates and divisions over poverty have dogged much of the history of the Franciscan friars.⁶ Francis's spirituality of poverty did not readily translate to juridical documents. Through most of the thirteenth century, Franciscan friars struggled to fulfill the at-times contradictory instructions of Francis regarding the practice of poverty.

Francis understood the Incarnation of Jesus as the greatest expression of poverty. Thus, for Franciscans, poverty was a "code" word pointing to the humble condescension of the Son of God to share in our humanity. Poverty brought together a bundle of related religious concepts that Francis considered constitutive of living the Gospel. Francis perceived the poor and marginalized to reflect the humanity of Jesus in a special way, and thus to bear great dignity. To be a human being with material needs has no shame. Begging discloses a certain dignity because we are able to share the same state as Christ, who was a beggar (along with Mary and the disciples).⁷ At the same time, to give alms is a positive religious practice, for this reflects the generosity of God. To match need with generosity is morally good on multiple levels: those in need

⁶ For an introduction see Malcolm Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210-1323* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1998).

⁷ ER 9:5, FA:ED 1, 70.

find fulfillment; those with abundance receive a blessing through their generosity; communion is enhanced by this holy interchange.

A recognizable Franciscan approach to an economic philosophy began to emerge a generation after Francis's death. In the mid-thirteenth century, Franciscan scholars expressed the intuitions of St. Francis in the philosophical, theological and ethical systems of their time. From their experience of lived religious life, they brought to the university questions about the theological character of poverty, also questions about how to interpret the evolution of societal thinking about money, wealth, and economics.

Franciscan friars devoted an enormous amount of energy to debating Francis's teachings on poverty. Some debates were quite polemical, and entangled Franciscan life in the politics of the church. Conflict turned to a considerable degree on how one answered the question: "How poor is poor enough?" The crescendo of these internal conflicts over poverty was the *usus pauper* debate. It was a clash between ministerial pragmatists who were immersed in preaching to the urban masses and the Spirituals who practiced a zealous, single-minded approach to living the vow of poverty as ascetical practice. The Spirituals believed that the Franciscan rule and its vow of poverty obligated a community to own no property, in other words, to live as indigent beggars. In the eyes of the Spirituals, poverty was the most fundamental religious principle articulated by Francis, more significant than dialogue with church authority. The *usus pauper* debate is a fascinating, but rather arcane, controversy. It has been very well examined by David Burr.⁸ The content of the debate itself has little to offer contemporary Franciscan

⁸ David Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty: The Origins of the Usus Pauper Controversy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989); Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), and Burr, "Poverty: A Cause for Unity or Division?" in *Poverty and Prosperity*, 65-80.

social philosophy.⁹ Its resolution is important, however, for it roughly coincides with a critical pivot in economic thought for the friars: from internal fraternal dissension to external social engagement. Franciscan concern with the practice of poverty did not end with the fading of the *usus pauper* controversy, but rather found fresh expression in a new question: what lessons might Franciscan poverty offer to church and society?

Francis's directives to his followers prohibiting possessions and wealth had the counterintuitive effect of prompting some friars to think quite profoundly about the character and function of money, capital, merchants, entrepreneurship, trade, and the art of good government. From the university of Paris to local provinces across Europe, the friars deliberated and developed a coherent philosophy for their use of goods in accord with the Gospel life they professed. The friars worked out their own ideas about the practice of poverty, and then became the confessors and counselors to others on how to use it. Akin to eunuchs among a royal family, the friars' renunciation established their trustworthiness in matters economic.¹⁰

Many Franciscan friars of this era came from families of merchants, and they wanted to chart a way for their fathers, uncles, brothers and nephews to earn their livelihood yet be good Catholics. Some of the best historical evidence we have for the interaction between Franciscans and merchants comes from penitential manuals – guides to priests who listened to confessions. In *The Merchant in the Confessional*, Odd Langholm documents how friar confessors made sense of the ethical issues arising with the evolving market economy as presented by traders,

⁹ However, the conflict did reflect divergent philosophical assumptions about the fundamental purpose of Franciscan religious life. In general, the zealots favored individual ascetic practice while the pastoral pragmatists favored public preaching in society. These divergent assumptions lead to divergent conclusions about institutional structures, and thus how many buildings and other economic resources can be justified to support the institution.

¹⁰ Todeschini, *Franciscan Wealth*, 83-85.

artisans and salesmen.¹¹ Langholm demonstrates how Franciscan friars played a critical role in making the Gospel teachings applicable to people in the marketplace.

These friars believed that the Franciscan way served as a model for the economic good of society as a whole. The process of applying wisdom from the “Evangelical perfection” of their own lifestyle to the society around them stimulated clarity of thought about the ethical and religious principles that might be shared. Thus, for the faithful, money was good if it was actively circulated and served the common good. If wealth was hoarded, that was wrong.¹²

Bonaventure and Scotus addressed some economic philosophy questions.¹³ Later Franciscan scholars developed and applied Franciscan social philosophy in ways that might be relatively more instructive for us today. Perhaps the most remarkable and influential Franciscan thinker in this area is Peter John Olivi (1248-1298), one of the most astonishing thinkers in Franciscan history. His brilliant yet polemical scholarship made him influential but at the same time controversial.¹⁴ In the observance of poverty he was a rigorist, but Burr has shown, he was not a Spiritual.

Olivi was born in Languedoc, in what is today southern France, and this shaped his interest in economic questions, because this region was very active in trade across the Mediterranean and beyond. The friars of his province came from the merchant class, and Olivi’s

¹¹ Langholm, *The Merchant in the Confessional: Trade and Price in the Pre-Reformation Penitential Handbooks* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003).

¹² Todeschini, *Franciscan Wealth*.

¹³ See Bernard Cullen, “Property in the Writings of St. Bonaventure,” in *L’homme et son Univers au Moyen Age*, ed. Christian Wenin (Louvain, Belgium: Editions d l’Institut Superier d Philosophie, 1986), 827-34, and Robert I. Mochrie, “Justice in Exchange: The Economic Philosophy of John Duns Scotus,” *Journal of Markets and Morality* 9 (2006) 35-56.

¹⁴ For an overview of his economic teaching, see “Franciscan Economics 4: Peter Olivi,” in Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools*, 345-72.

economic philosophy should be read through the lens of a close association between friars and merchants.¹⁵ He studied at the university of Paris, and apparently heard Bonaventure lecture there.¹⁶ Recent scholarship has shown that Olivi was enormously influential on Franciscan economic thought specifically, and late medieval European economic philosophy more generally.¹⁷ He argued that Franciscan poverty was a template for Christian economics, but in his vision, it was possible to integrate the praxis of rigorous Franciscan poverty with an optimistic understanding of merchants and markets. Olivi was one of the most influential Franciscan thinkers of the Middle Ages, but his scholarship and ideas were copied without attribution due to the controversies associated with some of his thought.¹⁸

Olivi wrote prolifically, but two important texts on economics have not been translated into English.¹⁹ Two with particular relevance here are: *De contractibus, de usurariis et de restitutionibus* (On contracts, usurers and restitution) and *De permutatione rerum, de emptionibus et venditionibus* (On the changes in things, buying and

¹⁵ Todeschini, "Franciscan Economics and Jews."

¹⁶ Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools*.

¹⁷ Since his writings were copied but not cited, this is not self-evident. Scholars have traced his influence by comparing texts. See Todeschini, "Theological Roots of the Medieval/Modern Merchants' Self-Representation," in *The Self-Perception of Early Modern Capitalists*, eds. Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 17-46.

¹⁸ His rigorist stance on poverty entangled him and his writings with the later actions and arguments of dissident Franciscan Spirituals. Some portions of his theological scholarship, especially his apocalyptic Joachimism, were condemned. Franciscans generally perceived Olivi as persecuted without justification. Contemporary scholars have traced Olivi's influence on subsequent Franciscan thinkers, despite the fact he was not cited with attribution, apparently out of fear that controversies surrounding Olivi's other ideas might undermine what was otherwise considered sound practical wisdom on matters economic.

¹⁹ One recent article explored Olivi's economics: Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. and David Flood, O.F.M., "Peter Olivi on the Early Christian Community (Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35): The Christian Way with Temporalities," *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007): 251-80.

selling). Olivi develops what we would today call price theory, or the justification for why an item should cost what it does.²⁰ He developed a positive assessment of the merchant in society, and contributed to the broader evolution of thinking about business and entrepreneurship in medieval Europe. He observed that different regions are abundant in some things and lacking in others, and that the merchant undertakes effort and risk to acquire, transport, and sell it. While others asserted it was a sin to resell a thing at a higher price without improving it, Olivi argued the merchant provided an educational service to his community when he determines a product's appropriate price; this is a service akin to an artisan using his skill. Olivi argued that mercantile profit might be justified on this basis: that the community pays merchants for their competence in how to identify the fair price of things. Merchants, although less "perfect" (according to the Gospel) than the friars, were nonetheless also experts in the use and value of things.²¹ He developed an understanding of trade and merchants that is far more positive than that of Thomas of Aquinas.²²

Olivi contributed from his experience as a Franciscan to the vocabulary Europe began to use to describe the relationship between the market and society: *industria*, working hard; *solicitudo*, diligent commitment; and *latitudo*, the variable range of value.²³ When he provides goods otherwise not available to a community at a fair price, the merchant is adding value by his actions and contributing to the building up of the common good. These ideas were further elaborated by Franciscan friars

²⁰ Langholm, "Olivi To Hutcheson: Tracing An Early Tradition In Value Theory," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 31 (2009): 131-41.

²¹ Todeschini, *Franciscan Wealth*, 119.

²² Raymond de Roover, *San Bernardino of Siena and San Antonino of Florence: The Two Great Economic Thinkers of the Middle Ages* (Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1967), 7.

²³ de Roover, *San Bernardino*, 19.

and others with the development of the late medieval economy.²⁴

In Olivi's writings we see an early expression of dissatisfaction with usury, then interpreted as a blanket ban on money lending at interest. Usury was a central issue debated in medieval economic thought. Olivi proposed that, if merchants are providing a service to civil society, there should be some ethical way for them to access capital.²⁵ This issue would be debated by subsequent friars, and some would formulate a most creative response.

***The Observant reform,
business ethics and microcredit***

Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444) was a leader in the Observant reform of the Franciscan friars in the 1400s.²⁶ This movement revived a strict practice of Franciscan life and tied it to public preaching across northern Italy. The Observants, rigorous in their practice of poverty, set out to reform the order and society. Their passionate preaching exemplified Franciscan social engagement in the fifteenth century, and provided another occasion for the friars to present their practice of poverty as a template to instruct the broader church. Bernardino addressed a wide range of social and religious ills, but the ethical dimensions of trade, entrepreneurship, and money were of considerable interest. His preaching is recorded in *De evangelio aeterno* (On the eternal gospel), a work composed of sixty-five sermons. These are model sermons, in Latin, to be used by others as the basis for popular preaching in the vernacular. Fourteen of these, devoted to economics, are in a subsection titled *Tratatus de contractibus* (Treatise on contracts), although it covers virtually all topics of concern to scholastic era economics (twelfth - seventeenth century).

²⁴ Zamagni, "Catholic Social Thought."

²⁵ Todeschini, *Franciscan Wealth*, 119.

²⁶ For an overview of his economic teachings, see de Roover, *San Bernardino*.

It begins with a justification of and limitations on private property, then describes the necessity of trade and the ethical guidelines for those in business, and the problem of value and the determination of just price. Bernardino drew from Scotus's approach to private property, lifted entire paragraphs from Olivi's writings verbatim, yet also developed and applied a philosophical approach reflecting the values of the Observant Franciscans.

Bernardino provided practical moral guidance to merchants so that they could be saved. He described three kinds of merchants or entrepreneurial activities that provided a positive service to a community:

1. Emerging industries that process raw materials into usable goods.
2. Import/export businesses that move products from one area to another, undertaking expense and risk.
3. Retail businesses preserve and store goods, and then sell them in appropriate quantities to individual consumers.²⁷

For Bernardino, the functions of the merchant (manufacture, transport, distribution) in service of society were socially useful because they added value to a community, although individuals might sin in the process. Bernardino's practical business ethics built upon Olivi's efforts to redeem the merchant. He justified the vocation of merchants on the basis of creating value for a community, within ethical limits. In a simplistic sense, we can trace the evolution of thought across the middle ages from: merchants could not be saved, to they might be saved, to if they provided a positive service to society and observed moral principles, they would be saved. Bernardino and the Observant reform extended a contingent legitimacy to what would later be named entrepreneurship, so long as the merchant abided by ethical norms.

²⁷ de Roover, *San Bernardino*, 16-17. de Roover states this categorization follows Scotus, but does not provide a reference.

In the late fifteenth century, the Observant Franciscans took this approach a step further to provide a positive proposal for access to credit, and in the process, revolutionized the church's thinking about usury. The ban on usury had the effect of deterring people from making loans. In reality, of course, the wealthy and powerful accessed credit, but the poor could not. The Observant friars questioned the blanket prohibition on loans. They looked for practical exceptions to explain how traders could handle money and exchange funds without engaging in usury. Because they were considered outside the Christian community, Jewish moneylenders were free from this prohibition, and they often made loans at rates of 40% or even 80%, which incurred resentment.²⁸ The diversity and evolution of understanding of the meaning and application of usury is beyond the scope of this article.²⁹ However, in a general sense, the understanding of usury as a blanket prohibition on loans with interest had given way to a prohibition on unjust rates of interest, which led to much debate about how to apply the principle of justice in this field.

The Observant Franciscans developed a practical alternative to usury in the form of microcredit institution: the *montes pietatis* (literally, "mountains of piety," referring to the accumulation of contributions by the faithful to start the institution). These fused religious devotion with a communal institution to provide loans with minimal interest to the poor.³⁰ The *montes* provoked

²⁸ Observant economic thought, including that of Bernardino da Siena, is entangled with anti-Jewish attitudes and preaching by Franciscans and others, which would be an aspect of our tradition we do not want to retrieve. See Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Semitism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) and McMichael and Myers, *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages*.

²⁹ For more on usury, see John T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1957) and Todeschini, "Franciscan Economics."

³⁰ For an overview of the *montes*, see Catherine R. Puglisi and William L. Barcham, "Bernardino da Feltre, the Monte di Pietà and the Man of Sorrows: Activist, Microcredit and Logo," *Artibus et Historiae* 29 (2008): 35-63.

heated moral debates that were ultimately resolved by the pope. The economic philosophy that spawned the *montes* transformed European thinking about usury, credit, and capital.

These friars sought to alleviate poverty and to abolish moneylending at exorbitant rates by Jews. The first *monte* was created in Perugia in 1462. Bernardino da Feltre (1439-1494) is the friar most closely identified with the *montes*. He preached extensively starting about 1460. He did not launch any *montes* until 1484, but founded 30 in the northern Italian peninsula during the last decade of his life.³¹

The *montes* were founded in the context of the public, multi-day preaching campaigns carried out by the friars of the Observant reform. They fused religious processions, preaching in town squares to solicit donations to fund the *montes*, and the formation of a committee to assess the requests for loans. The friars deployed images of the “Man of Sorrows,” which had been popular for about two centuries in this region, to foster an understanding of the suffering of Jesus as an expression of God’s pathos for humanity and to encourage them to express their religious devotion by making donations to fund the local *monte*. By drawing on the “Man of Sorrows” image, the friars tapped into existing popular devotion, cultivated feelings of empathy, and inspired generosity. The fusion of images of the suffering of Jesus with economic hardship of those who are poor prompted religious devotion expressed through an economic act. The *montes* were overseen by committees of municipal leaders and friars. The religious devotion and public ethical practice were indivisible.³²

Montes operated like a hybrid of what we would recognize as a pawnshop and a community credit union.

³¹ Oreste Bazzichi, *Il Paradosso Francese Tra Povertà e Società di Mercato: Dai Monti di Pietà Alle Nuove Frontiere Etico-Sociali Del Credito* (Torino, Italia: Effatà, 2011).

³² For a vivid account of public religious events organized by Bernardino da Feltre to found a *monte pietatis*, and his use of religious imagery, see Puglisi and Barcham, “Bernardino da Feltre.”

They depended upon donations for initial capital, and then made small loans secured by personal possessions functioning as collateral. Their loans charged an interest rate between 4% and 12%. The decision to charge interest was not taken lightly. Bernardino da Feltre, in the year before he died (1493) stated it would be a better and more religious act to make loans at zero interest, but stated that experience taught that this was infeasible. More than sixty-six Observant Franciscan friars were involved in founding *montes* 1463-1515.³³

Augustinian and Dominican friars condemned the *montes*, accusing Franciscans of practicing usury, and also of heresy, since they clung to ideas (considered to be) manifestly in error. Proponents and opponents wrote tracts against each other, held public debates in town squares, and launched inquisitions against each other. Franciscans vigorously defended the *montes*, appealing in part to the experience of the poor. These controversies were put to rest at Lateran Council V in 1515 when Pope Leo X gave formal approval to the Franciscan position. These institutions continued in various forms in Italy, Spain, and Latin America for centuries.

The creation of the *montes*, reflecting a practical Franciscan economic philosophy in the late middle ages, changed the way that the church thought about money, loans, and capital. Usury had been understood as a blanket ban on the charging of interest, but the Franciscans saw the value of creating an exception, inspired by the compassion of Jesus and in dialogue with the needs of the poor. They considered how to foster affordable loans for the poor without breaking the usury prohibition, and then defended the *montes* as a practical and ethical approach. The friars changed the nature of the public conversation about credit from “no” to “how could ordinary people access affordable loans to materially improve their lives?”

³³ See Anscar Parsons, O.F.M., “Economic Significance of the *Montes Pietatis*,” *Franciscan Studies* 22 (1941): 3-28.

The Catalan friar and the political order

The third study in Franciscan social philosophy is Friar Francesc Eiximenis (1340-1409). He is considered the philosophical architect of Catalan political theory, and served as an advisor to the Crown of Aragon.³⁴ He joined the Franciscans in Catalonia, in what is now eastern Spain, living out his later years in Valencia. He studied at Toulouse, Cologne, Paris, and Oxford, where he was influenced by the philosophy of Scotus. He wrote extensively on social, political, philosophical and theological subjects, mostly in the Catalan language. He was one of the most influential medieval thinkers on the Iberian peninsula, and his work was read by monarchs, nobility and urban officials. He wrote an enormous body of work, addressing virtually every aspect of social, political, economic and religious life in the Catalan Middle Ages. He is considered the greatest medieval economist by many economic historians. He formulated fundamental ideas about economic life that shaped economics as a formal discipline as it emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His most important text was *Lo Crestià* (The Christian), an overview of Christian life. For our topic, his most important text is *Regiment de la cosa pública* (Government of the republic) which expressed his political philosophy, and there is evidence that the city leaders in Valencia used to shape civic life.³⁵

³⁴ For an overview of his economic teaching, see Paolo Evangelisti, "Contract and Theft: Two Legal Principles Fundamental to the *civilitas* and *res publica* in the Political Writings of Francesc Eiximenis, Franciscan Friar," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 405-26. The Kingdom of Aragon at one time covered much of the western Mediterranean region. Francesc is the Catalan rendering of Francisco, and Eiximenis is the Catalan rendering of "Jimenez."

³⁵ Anonymous, "Sixth centennial of Francesc Eiximenis," *Catalan Historical Review* 3 (2010): 115-18. During Francesc's lifetime, the "Christian" reconquista campaign forcibly expelled Moors from Valencia. His collaboration in the anti-Muslim dimension of the reconquista is another aspect of Franciscan social engagement not to be retrieved.

Francesc Eiximenis articulated a political economy, a philosophy of how economic and political institutions should be organized in service to the moral life of Christians.³⁶ Drawing from Scotus, he understood a social community to be defined, in large part, based on how needs were addressed through mutually beneficial economic exchange. Drawing from Olivi, Eiximenis developed a philosophy of money and trade that reflects the importance of mutually beneficial exchange through commerce. He was highly critical of traders who hoarded, arguing that they do not have a right to hold a public office or even own a house in town.

Eiximenis' political economic philosophy was based on *bona civilitas*, which can be translated as good government or good civic culture.³⁷ He drew from Olivi's *De contractibus* to express a vision of society suggestive of the ideals of Franciscan brotherhood. The notion of contract was fundamental to his ethical vision of society. Eiximenis asserted that the need for contracts underpinned the rationale for cities. His use of "contract" is far more comprehensive than our contemporary understanding as merely a legal document. Rather, contract meant forging reciprocal relationships to address the needs of individuals and the commonwealth, in other words what we today might call a social compact. *Lo Crestià* articulated an understanding of civil authority that does not come from God but from contractual agreement among society's members, who were obliged to certain duties, including holding rulers to account. He articulated a philosophy of the role of the sovereign in society. His writings shaped the political philosophy and political culture in the Kingdom of Aragon for centuries after his death.³⁸ Contemporary Catalan scholars consider Eiximenis to be the founder of Pactism, a branch of political and economic philosophy still vital in this part

³⁶ Evangelisti, "Contract and Theft."

³⁷ Evangelisti, "Contract and Theft."

³⁸ Evangelisti, "Contract and Theft."

of modern Spain, meaning socioeconomic life is based upon bargaining, negotiation, and mutual consent.³⁹

Eiximenis is an extraordinary example of a Franciscan socially-engaged philosopher. He articulated a practical political economic philosophy that had wide currency in his society. In his writings, we find a fully developed Franciscan political economic philosophy. The practice of voluntary poverty by the Franciscans trained them to think of the practical ethics and appropriate use of money and wealth in community, and there are few writers who more clearly evince this practical social philosophy than Eiximenis.

Retrieving our tradition for contemporary social engagement

This essay introduced socially-engaged Franciscan philosophers brought Franciscan values to bear on their own societies. It described how they applied lessons from their lived experience as Franciscans to matters economic and political, and demonstrated the degree to which Franciscan philosophers engaged the material affairs of their societies. They deployed practical intelligence and wisdom to articulate a positive moral vision for Christians' participation in the civic life of their communities.

This article underscores several themes in Franciscan social philosophy. Social criticism is not enough. Franciscans are to give good example by their lives, but also to communicate the Gospel project to society. Advocacy for the poor and marginalized, and for the common good, are certainly part of this tradition. However, these examples suggest that friars listened very carefully to lay people, to their struggles and concerns. Their ethical deliberation and philosophical reflection incorporate the practical concerns of ordinary people. To the fullest extent possible, this practice from our

³⁹ Pompeu Casanovas, "Catalan Legal Mind and the Legal Catalan Mind: A Brief Overview on Legal and Political Principles," *Journal of Catalan Intellectual History* 1 (2011): 161-77.

tradition should inform the retrieval of our Franciscan philosophical tradition today.

Franciscan philosophers played an important role in shaping the idea of the civil economy. Several observers have noted the influence of the civil economy idea on the economic philosophy of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, Benedict outlined a Catholic approach to globalization, grounded in the logic of gift, justice and the common good. Benedict argued that to foster genuine human development, globalization must be more than economic; it must include the globalization of solidarity. Describing the influence of Franciscan social philosophy on the rise of the civil economy and Catholic social teaching is beyond the scope of this article, but this merits further research and elaboration by scholars.

Contemporary Franciscans, lay and religious, may recognize in these examples antecedents for our justice and peace advocacy. Franciscans believe that the Gospel has public significance, and there is value in articulating our core religious and ethical values in forms that speak to the aspirations of our fellow human beings. Anger at injustice, in the prophetic tradition, is appropriate when confronting many contemporary social problems. However the examples above point to the value of making positive social proposals. Bernardino da Siena did not limit his preaching to criticism of unethical economic behavior; he outlined how entrepreneurial activity created value for a community. Bernardino da Feltre was not content to preach against usury; he and his fellow Observants created positive alternatives to address human economic needs. Francesc Eiximenis proposed a political philosophy reflecting respect, reciprocity, and mutual aid. What positive proposals for economic and political life might Franciscans offer today? What means might we use to communicate this? *Caritas in veritate* called for microfinance, social entrepreneurship, and economic cooperative projects. The Franciscan family should be in the vanguard of this type of work.

This essay has identified several original texts that merit additional attention, whether by creating a critical edition or translating the text into English. Two of Olivi's should be prioritized: *De contractibus, de usurariis et de restitutionibus*, and *De permutatione rerum, de emptionibus et venditionibus*. Bernardino da Siena's *De evangelio aeterno* merits translation into English. Additional research may be needed to identify historical texts relevant to the *montes pietatis* for translation, or determine which selections of Francesc Eiximenis's work could be made available in English. There is a tremendous amount of research in Italian, French, and Catalan in this area. To further the retrieval of Franciscan social philosophy, an initiative could be undertaken to identify the most helpful scholarly articles in these languages, translate them, and make them available for study.

Franciscan scholars and practitioners could launch collaborative efforts to discern how best to articulate a retrieval of Franciscan philosophy for contemporary social engagement. Scholars can provide data, insight and interpretation of the past, and practitioners can share the reality of social engagement today and test the value of retrieval scholarship against the realities they engage. A holy exchange, perhaps launched with a conference, may provide mutual enrichment, and could lead to a broader dialogue about how to bring economic and political philosophy to Franciscan educational ministries, and to foster greater social engagement through Franciscan communication media.

From these examples we can draw inspiration, wisdom and guidance. Not all the answers lie in the past, but by better understanding our tradition, we can engage our brothers and sisters – young or old, lay or religious, Christian or just socially conscious – in bringing the Gospel to life in our time and social context.

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Saint Bernardino di Siena 1380-1444

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CREATION

REV. BRIAN LOWDEN

In the debate about climate change the contribution from the major faiths has not been as prominent as might be expected. In fact, over many years some commentators have implied that the religious world view is as much part of the problem as the solution. Today the need for a theological interface with ecology has intensified. Thirty years ago the concern was mainly about conservation and preventing the extinction of threatened species. Now, in the face of global climate change, *homo sapiens* are finding themselves under threat. In many ways the essential aspects haven't changed at all; it was humankind's destruction of the environment that threatened the Bittern or the Great Bustard, and it is human beings who are now threatening the whole ecosystem, on which all species depend.

While it might be argued that the world can do without a particular species of fly or crustacean, the threat to human life takes us into a completely different dimension. This gives rise to another vital question: is this modern concern for ecology only for our benefit? And, if so, has anything changed in the way we view creation? After all, the original crisis is a consequence of seeing the world as only existing to serve our needs. In recent years there's been a trend among environmentalists to move from the process of trying to control pollution, clean up the earth, re-establish threatened species, to what we might call deep ecology which seeks a new way of looking

at environmental ethics. In essence it attempts to change attitudes by recognizing human beings as part of the creation to which they belong. Ecology can either be considered as a technique to manage scarce natural resources or as a new paradigm to relate to nature, looking at “all interconnected beings” as forming an immense and complex system.

Christianity places human beings in a unique place within creation as creatures that are also redeemed. Consequently an argument could be made for the primacy of scientific ingenuity to deal with the unwanted side effects of our technologically dominated way of life and in ensuring the safety and happiness of human beings throughout the world. And yet, the very term ecosystem indicates the interdependence that we have with creation. In fact many of our present problems seem to stem from our failure to take into account the complex interrelationships that form the basis for the intricate way our world works.

Some have argued that it's precisely what might be termed the *anthropocentric view*, derived from Judeo-Christian teaching, which has significantly contributed to the present situation. Humanity is considered the highpoint of creation, the center of the world and the other creatures that inhabit the planet are inferior to human needs. So we construct a hierarchy of value with humans being at the pinnacle, followed by those animals who seem to possess human-like characteristics or that evoke some emotion in humans, with reptiles and insects taking the lower places, and single cell life forms the lowest of all. This problem stems from viewing humanity as separate from the rest of nature, a view which became prevalent in the Middle-ages; viewing nature as a “*thing*” to be used in any way humans wanted.

Such views developed from an extreme and one-sided view of the transcendence of God. And yet the Scriptures, if one looks hard enough, contain the kernels of a theological response to the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves. The theology of creation finds a scriptural

basis not only in the creation literature of Genesis but more importantly in the ramifications of the doctrine of the incarnation. The need to be stewards of creation rather than simply the masters of all that has been created for our pleasure is now generally accepted by all Christians. The beauty of creation as a reflection of the wonders of God is seen particularly in the Psalms and Wisdom literature. Creation itself can reveal the Creator to us and as a manifestation of God provides an assured basis for a more reverential way of living.

Perhaps a managed, mutually beneficial approach to creation is a viable answer to our relationship with the environment. Within such an approach, ecology is a mechanism for ensuring long-term productivity. If burning fossil fuels for energy causes the release of green-house gases then switch to nuclear power, which doesn't produce such gases. Later the problems of dealing with nuclear waste will need to be addressed by the ever inventive scientific community. Such an anthropocentric approach uses, protects and conserves the earth and all other creatures to ensure their future availability, and this ultimately will only increase the demands that human beings make on their environment.

While creation theology has developed, especially as an aspect of liberation theology, the *magisterium* of the Church has until recently been exceptionally slow to develop a significant body of teaching focused on ecological problems. Pope John Paul II really began to formulate an environmental theology within catholic social doctrine. In *Centesimus annus* the Pope identified the causes of environmental problems as stemming from human pretense of exercising unconditional dominion over things, heedless of any moral considerations. Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* emphasised that the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature. While these developments might be seen as the beginning of a Christian response to ecology, it did nothing to develop a spirituality of

creation. Yet in spite of this lacuna in teaching, Christians throughout the centuries have lived in harmony with nature and their example might be helpful to us as we face our present challenges. Amongst these examples, St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) has been singled out by the Church (in 1979) as the patron Saint of ecology and a deeper examination of his approach to the created world could be helpful in developing an authentically Christian response to the current ecological situation. His was an attitude based more on a theological understanding than a romantic or sentimental notion. St Francis's reverence for creation was founded on his recognition of God's creative love, and flowing from this, on what he saw as the truly revolutionary event of the incarnation, seeing Christ as the high point of both the created and the supernatural order.

The Franciscan attitude to ecology is based on relationship. Francis realized that there is a love from beyond the world that is both at the heart of everything and the explanation for all existence. It was this love which enabled him to see everyone and everything, animate and inanimate, cuddly or venomous, as a brother or sister. To understand Francis's relationship with creation we have first to be aware of his understanding of the incarnation.

After the great Christological Councils of the fourth – sixth centuries there had been a tendency to emphasize the divinity of Christ above his humanity. And so transcendence, the idea of God being absolutely other, resulted in seeing God as removed from human life and understanding. From the tenth century onwards there was a reawakening of devotion to the humanity of Christ; in the fact that the unfathomable mystery of God has been made known in Jesus of Nazareth. We then see renewed devotion to the birth of Christ as a defenseless baby in a stable, to picturing events in the public life of Jesus and especially in revering all the details of his passion and death, as well as a more personal devotion to the Eucharist. It was through meditating on the mystery of

the incarnation that Francis arrived at a spirituality of creation.

For Francis the fact that through the incarnation Jesus became his brother formed the most fundamental relationship that underscored the way he connected with creation. It profoundly influenced how he saw other human beings, so that the outcast, the leper and the pauper, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, were Francis's brothers and sisters. The doctrine of the incarnation might of course be used to limit God's concern with humanity alone. God after all became a human being, yet by becoming human, God also became a creature. Thus Francis was able to extend his experience of brotherhood to all other created beings, which had an innate dignity making them ends in themselves rather than means to facilitate Francis's enjoyment. St. Bonaventure, who produced a theological reflection on the life of St Francis, wrote: "From a reflection on the primary source of all things ... he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of brother or sister, because he knew they shared with him the same beginning." (LMj 8:6.) This is a profoundly important insight because it shows that the primary significance is not the difference between creatures but rather what they have in common.

Francis showed an almost Buddhist or even Jain respect for animal life; it is recorded for example, that he would remove earth worms from the road to prevent them being trodden on. (1C 80). This concern was extended even to inanimate objects, so that we read that he walked with reverence on stones (2C 165) and when he washed his hands he chose a place where the water he used wouldn't afterwards be trampled underfoot (MP 118). He also wouldn't let the brothers cut down the whole tree when they cut wood, so that it might sprout again (2C 165). For Francis animals, plants and elements have intrinsic value through being created by God, and so deserve our reverence in their own right as creatures like ourselves. For St. Francis the words brother and sister which he used to describe his relationships, were magical words of

utmost mystery. They were words that graphically opened up for him the structure of reality in which he called Christ his brother, himself a brother and then all things in creation his brothers and sisters. Francis respected creation because he recognised that God loved everything into existence and then entered creation himself, so bringing all things into a relationship with him. And this wasn't a one way process, the first biographer of Francis, Thomas of Celano writes that: "All creatures, tried to give their love in return and reply by their own gratitude as he deserved; they were glad when he caressed them, they agreed when he requested anything, they obeyed when he commanded anything." (2C 166). Perhaps they sensed that wholeness which was present when God, man and animals lived together in original harmony. Bonaventure provides a number of examples of Francis's encounters with creatures. The story of the live hare he was given in Greccio is typical.

He put it on the ground free to run away where it pleased. At the call of the kind father, it leapt quickly into his lap. He fondled it with the pious affection of his heart, and seemed to pity it like a mother. After warning it with gentle talk not to let itself be caught again, he let it to go free. But as often as he placed it on the ground to run away, it always came back to the father's bosom, as if it perceived with some hidden sense of its heart the pity he had for it (LMj 8:8).

Coming from Francis's insights on the incarnation was his desire to undertake manual work and live as a poor person. He wished to follow what he saw as Christ's way of life, and to journey lightly on the earth. Poverty was a liberation from all those attitudes which prevented the self from achieving union with God and with creation. Essentially this is a return to original innocence, to the state before the Fall, when the man and the woman lived in harmony with creation. Human history tells of our

alienation from God, ourselves, one another and from creation. There certainly is a deep vein of devotion to absolute poverty in Franciscan literature, but perhaps, for us today it is more appropriate to speak of a simple lifestyle free from possessiveness. Francis's insistence on not owning anything, of seeing everything as belonging to the Creator, is a lesson our ecologically challenged world could do well to learn.

Francis of Assisi was not a conservationist or ecologist but he was, in the widest sense, an environmentalist because he recognized that our place within the world was constrained by the relationship we have the rest of creation. It is a relationship based on respect for the unique dignity of each constituent part, a relationship which constantly seeks the good of the other. Within such a relationship exploitation could not exist and neither would our "footprint" on the planet be any more intense than necessary. Francis, in the *Canticle of Creatures*, which he composed in the last years of his life, indicates how that relationship influences the way we interact with the world. Celano tells us that Francis was in great pain & tempted by despair and asked God to give him an assurance of his eternal salvation. He was told to rejoice as if he already shared in the kingdom: the canticle was the product of this rejoicing (2C 213). Through this great poem Francis expresses the relationship between ourselves & the rest of creation as essentially a fraternal relationship. By calling the earth his sister he introduces a relationship that often arouses protective feelings. But Francis then goes on to qualify that relationship "Praised be You, my Lord through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us." (CtC 9). Here the earth is seen as both a sibling and mother, combining the notion of protection with the reverence shown to the one who both gives us life and nurtures us. It is in recognising this relationship that we are able to approach creation with the respect that will lead us to protect our planet and the future of all those organisms that depend on it of life. St. Francis was so pleased with his canticle that

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he requested his brothers recite it, or even better, to sing it to him. Over the last weeks of his life he added to his original composition, adding a verse about forgiveness and peace and finally, as the end approached a verse to welcome Sister Death.

Our place in creation is undoubtedly a special one, and it is special because of our self-reflective consciousness, which enables us to unite and be united with all things. This, as Andrew Linzey saw, gives us a special responsibility for creation; to do what other creatures are not able to do (at least explicitly) and to live as reflections of God's love to all that surrounds us. Praise then should be our response to our fraternal (quasi-sacramental) relationship with our environment and be the center of our creation spirituality.



BOOK REVIEW

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH FRANCIS OF ASSISI, Damien Vorreux; new edition by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, 2012), 111 pp., paperback

The classic *First Encounter with Francis of Assisi* was originally published in French in 1973 by Friar Damien Vorreux, as *Première Rencontre avec François d'Assise* by Les Editions Franciscaines, Paris. It was first translated into English by Paul Schwartz and Paul Lachance for the Franciscan Herald Press in 1978.

In this newest edition, Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, who had collaborated with Vorreux along with Théophile Desbonnets and Thaddée Matura on a French edition of the writings of Francis (1981), has totally revisited the 1978 English translation, updated the footnotes and bibliography to the level of current Franciscan scholarship, used the newest standard for quoting the early Franciscan documents in English (R. Armstrong, W. Hellmann and W. Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New City Press, 1999-2001), and freshly translated the writings of Francis himself based upon the latest critical edition of those writings by Carlo Paolazzi (Grottaferrata, 2009). The result is a most engaging, comprehensible, and contemporary presentation of Vorreux's wonderful gift to the world of Franciscan scholarship over five decades, until his death in 1998.

That gift was the introduction of early Franciscan documents into the study of Franciscan questions. Vor-

reux's insight and ardor brought us back to the sources, something almost taken for granted today by our leading contemporary Franciscan scholars as well as those of us who are lifelong students.

Godet-Calogeras's new edition and fresh translation, especially in the final section, "Further Readings" would, I imagine, greatly please Vorreux who worked to make the writings of the first Franciscans accessible to their innumerable descendants. As in the original, this new edition clearly traces Francis's spiritual development in the context of the historical and ecclesial milieu into which he was born, lived, developed his fresh Gospel movement, and completed his life's journey.

Those contexts are both applicable today as contemporary readers seek to apply Francis's words, vision and decisions within our own early twenty-first century context. Vorreux's approach is helpful and enlightening in its organization of Francis's words within their particular historical circumstances.

Franciscan scholarship over the past four decades since the first publication of this work has given us sharper insights into the world in which Francis wrote and acted. Two examples came to mind as I read the second of the book's original three sections.

The first example addresses Francis's visit to the Sultan (38-40). Vorreux used the standard source of his time, Celano's *First Life*, to identify two desires of Francis's era that motivated him: desire for martyrdom and conversion of the infidels. However, several scholarly works of recent decades indicate that Francis had been converted to a broader Gospel desire; namely, to reach out to the marginalized and despised in a fraternal relationship as Jesus taught and exemplified. Refer, for instance, to Paul Moses' *The Saint and the Sultan* (New York: Doubleday, 2009).

The second example of a changing perspective from more recent scholars is the reference to Bonaventure (47) where Vorreux writes that "we would not really know the Franciscan ideal" without Bonaventure's "adaptation."

For a more current scholarly perspective, I recommend *The Misadventure of Francis of Assisi* by Jacques Dalarun (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002). In the end, Francis's own words best indicate his message.

From these two examples I find within myself profound gratitude for the recent work of contemporary Franciscan scholars, especially the current generation of lay scholars who freely scrutinize beyond the hagiographic biases which circumscribed much of what I and my generation received as initial Franciscan formation.

In the other two sections of the original text I find only Vorreux's genius as a scholar, and even more, his very keen intuition as a Franciscan that the writings of Francis reveal the saint's personal and ongoing conversion to a life concretely motivated by the teachings of the Incarnate Word. That is a grace experienced by Vorreux and bequeathed to us through the Godet-Calogeras translation in this new edition. I highly recommend this small and accessible volume from Franciscan Institute Publications for general readers and students new to Franciscan studies, as well as those, like myself, who simply and deeply appreciate such a breath of fresh air.

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BOOK REVIEW

Horan, Daniel, *Dating God: Live and Love in the Way of St. Francis* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2012).

The Franciscan family is gifted with a new up and coming Franciscan scholar, Fr. Dan Horan, O.F.M., a newly ordained friar with the Holy Name Province. We have read many of his articles in various publications but *Dating God: Live and Love in the Way of St. Francis* is Horan's first book. The title definitely is an eye-catcher to all, especially our younger generation who are beginning their journey of understanding their relationship with God. Horan attempts to capture the imagination of all for a new and creative way of entering into our relationship with God.

Horan tells the story of one person's journey to find God in his life. This down-to-earth explanation of approaching a relationship with God simulates how we as human beings begin our relationships with one another. Some of our relationships are superficial, some are acquaintances, some are closer as friends and family and others are more intimate to build longer lasting relationships. It is all about building trust with one another and God in a language that especially younger people can relate to their life's journey. This also parallels how Francis began his soul's journey to God.

Horan begins the "First Date" as we would begin a pilgrimage searching for God, just as Francis's journey with God began as a yearning from the heart for something more in life. Francis's call of the heart was to live a gos-

pel way of life in relationship with all of God's creation. Horan guides the reader to weave the primary question of the heart throughout the book: How can I know and love God today? Can we look at this question with new lenses in the concept of dating God? In the summary and reflective questions posed at the end of each chapter, Horan opens the summary discussion of the first chapter with the same question St. Francis posed when beginning his personal search for God and the journey of what was to become the Franciscan Family: Who am I?, Where did I come from? and Where am I going?

In chapter two the author asks the question, What is our true self before God? This is also expressed in a quote from St. Bonaventure, "God is the One who is closer to you than you are to yourself." It is like finding a tree in the forest. Horan refers to the writings of Duns Scotus citing *haecceitas* – this-ness or "human-ness" – as God's plan for our existence in a world with us at the center of God's love for each one of us. To put Scotus's idea in another framework is to ask what makes me me and you you? We are reminded that one of the greatest challenges for this and future generations is that people need to know themselves before they can have a good relationship with others. It is through the writings of St. Clare that we as Franciscans have come to realize that it is through knowing our true selves that we come to know God.

As in any relationship, at times it can be a long-distance relationship with experiences of loneliness. Francis's life was centered on experiences of the Crucified Christ and the phrase, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" This was something Francis related to and is a question many of us ask ourselves often. It is through prayer, as we see in the Psalms, that a distant relationship with God is brought into focus to become a relationship of reciprocal love and understanding in those times of challenge. At the same time Horan uses the language of "making a date with God," as those times of solitude to be alone with God to build our relationship with God. For Franciscans this is an invitation to a hermitage ex-

perience and the “Rule of the Hermitage,” that Francis provided for us so that we could have that quiet time with God. Horan shares his time of solitude in a hermitage experience and invites us to find that space in our lives to enter into the mystery that is the very Love that gives us meaning and life.

It is through these experiences of contemplation that we become an “Everyday Mystic.” Horan uses the writings of St. Bonaventure’s, *Soul’s Journey to God*, to ponder the question of “being and doing.” This weaves us back to some of the original questions of who you are and how you live, rather than what you do. So often when we are asked to explain who we are, we have the tendency to talk about what we do. To answer the question of our being challenges us to see the world anew. St. Francis did not find God in the extraordinary moments but in the everyday moments of “being.” St. Clare’s lived a life of “being” and was a model for us to gaze, consider, contemplate and imitate and to be the mirror image of God. Likewise, Horan uses the writings of Bl. Angela of Foligno, one of the Franciscan Mystics, to view the world as “pregnant with God,” full of possibilities if we take time to be present to God’s love. Can we allow God to shape and influence the way we see reality?

Horan continues this relationship with God by knowing God through Scripture in the chapter titled: *Love Letters from God: The Word*. What is the story of God for us? God’s story of creation of all out of love is told through God’s love letters through the ages. God sent the prophets to help us understand those love letters. God’s love was shared through Jesus the Christ so that we could experience the human and divine inspiration and the guidance of the dynamic communication of The Spirit. Francis understood the power of God’s love and the presence of God’s Word through the Scriptures. Horan leaves a reflective question for us to consider: If I wrote a love letter to God, what would I say?

In Chapter Seven Horan takes an interesting turn in relationships as he discusses being for others as God is

for us. Francis had a desire to be in relationship with the Sultan and went to the Sultan in an attitude of presence, dialogue and witness. How are we in solidarity with social justice today? Do we go in peace to serve God and one another? The author shares the Franciscan story of a colleague moving from a “be-attitude” of selfish to selfless. Horan also shares the story of Francis moving from being selfish to selfless in a moment of conversation as the crucifix spoke, “Francis, repair my house.” As with Francis, our prayer life is more than a relationship with “me and God,” but an over-flowing life-giving source of service to all of God’s creation.

It is that gift of God’s creation that Francis poured his heart out in gratitude to God through the Praises of the Cantic of Creatures to the Whole Family. Francis’s model of care for creation is also a challenge for us to view the world as humanity’s playground or God’s House. Do we live in solidarity in a “dominion” model of relationship over God’s creation? Or do we live as Francis had hoped, in a “kinship” model with shared responsibility to “be” in relationship to care for the needs of the cosmos?

In the conclusion, Horan brings us full circle with new lenses to see our relationship that starts with our first date with God and ends with a desire to continue living a prayer-filled life in a love relationship with God, striving for wholeness with all of creation. In the Franciscan tradition, rooted in gospel living, each one of us has an amazing love story with God to share.

Paula J. Scraba, Ph.D., O.F.S.
St. Bonaventure University, New York

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The Franciscan Federation of the Sisters and Brothers in the United States, Third Order Regular, is searching for an Executive Director to begin duties on July 1, 2013. The Federation's mission is to promote the exploration and study of Franciscan Evangelical life through national and regional programming. The office of the Federation is located in Washington, D.C. where the Executive Director directs and oversees the administration and programs of the Federation. Other responsibilities include representing the Federation in designated external forums and assisting the National Board in its role of creating policies, implementing Federation objectives and securing funds from foundations, corporations and individuals.

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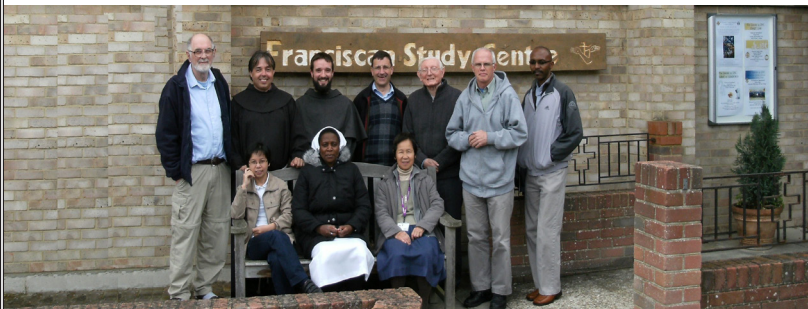
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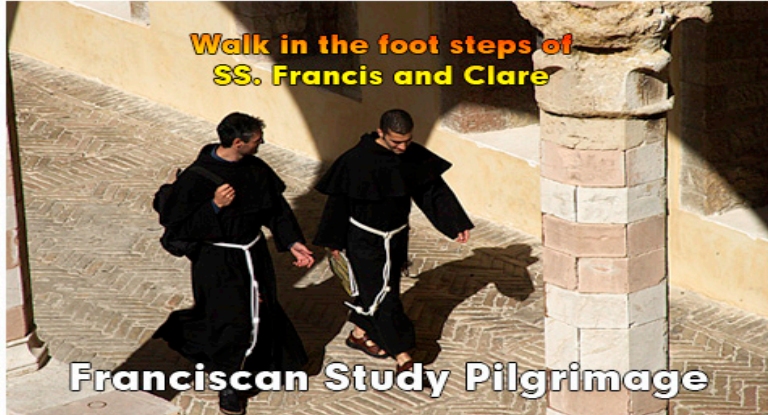
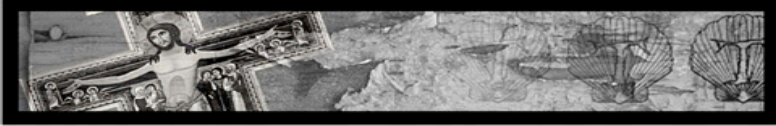
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Title: *The Life of Saint Margaret of Cortona*

Author: Translated by Thomas Renna and Shannon Larson

ISBN: 978-1-57659-301-1

Price: \$44.95 HC; \$29.95 TP

Pages: 344

Publication Date: August 2012

Format: Hard Cover

Series: N/A

BISAC: REL110000 RELIGION/Christianity/Saints and Sainthood

REL012130 RELIGION / Christian Life /Women's Issues

HIS037010 HISTORY / Medieval

Saint Margaret of Cortona is the light of the Third Order of Fracis. Such is the theme of the most extensive biography of any Franciscan Tertiary in the Middle Ages. Margaret's extraordinary career brings the historian closer to the early development of the Franciscans and the Order of Penance; it tells us much about how women saints were described, and about how civic cults of saints emerged. Another window, although a smaller one, opens to the tensions between the Franciscan Community and the Spiritual Franciscans before the split prior to Pope John XXII. Indeed it could be said that we know more about Margaret of Cortona than about any woman of thirteenth-century Italy, with the exception of Clare of Assisi and Clare of Montefalco.

This edition is translated from the critical Latin edition by Fortunato Iozzelli, O.F.M. of *The Life of Saint Margaret of Cortona* by Fra Giunta Bevegnati. The original translation by Thomas Renna has been edited by Shannon Larson.

THOMAS RENNA, Professor of History at Saginaw Valley State University, Michigan, teaches history of the Middle Ages, Ancient Rome, Renaissance, France, and ancient and modern Middle East. He has an undergraduate degree in History from the University of Scranton, a masters of Medieval History from the University of Nebraska and a PhD in Medieval History from Brown University.

Renna has published three books, including *Jerusalem in Medieval Thought 400-1300* (Mellen Pr 2002), 120 journal articles on medieval thought: political theory, church-state conflicts, Franciscan, Cistercian, Benedictine, biblical exegesis, hagiography, manuscript illumination, Petrarch, Augustine. He also has given 160 paper presentations at conferences in US, Canada, Europe, and Middle East.

Renna has received numerous awards and fellowships for scholarship and teaching.

SHANNON LARSON has a Bachelor's degree from Northwestern College where she studied Egyptian, Jewish, and Church history and biblical studies. She has a Master's degree in Medieval History from Marquette University. There, she specialized in crime and justice. Larson's research has focused on the intersection of rape and virginity in medieval discursive contexts, and on British and Continental jurisprudence. She is currently an independant scholar and works part time at an historical society.

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Title: *First Encounter With Francis of Assisi*

Author: by Damien Vorreux, translated by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras

ISBN: 978-1-57659-357-0

Price: \$14.95

Pages: 112

Publication Date: June 2012

Format: Tradepaper

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BISAC: REL 110000 RELIGION / Christianity / Saints & Sainthood

REL 015000 RELIGION / Christianity / History

REL 108020 RELIGION / Christian Church / History

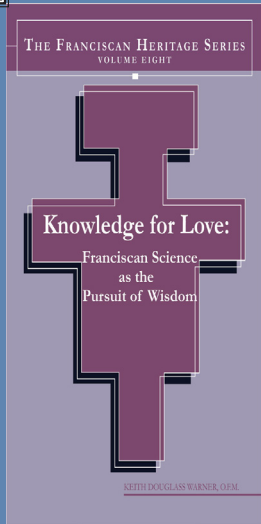
First Encounter with Francis of Assisi: Damien Vorreux, who died in 1988, was a French scholar who began to publish French translations of the early Franciscan documents in the early 1950s. His deep knowledge of those documents and his understanding of Francis were the inspiration for this classic presentation of Francis of Assisi. Published in French in 1973 and first offered in English by Franciscan Press in 1979, Jean-François Godet-Calogeras – who worked with Vorreux – combines the latest scholarship and the most current English translation of the Early Documents with his own translation of the writings of Francis in offering this new edition of *First Encounter with Francis of Assisi*. This short text is an excellent introduction to Francis and the world in which he lived.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS GODET-CALOGERAS is a Franciscan scholar internationally known for his publications on the early Franciscan documents, in particular the writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi, and for his lectures and workshops on early Franciscan history. A native of Belgium, Jean-François received his education in classical philology and medieval studies at the Catholic University of Louvain. In the early 1980s he facilitated the international work group which elaborated the text of the new Rule of the Third Order Regular. He currently serves as a professor at the Franciscan Institute/School of Franciscan Studies, Saint Bonaventure University. He is general editor of the journal, *Franciscan Studies*. Works published by Franciscan Institute Publications by Godet-Calogeras include *An Unencumbered Heart – A Tribute to Clare of Assisi* (2004, with Roberta McKelvie, OSF) and *The Third Order Regular Rule: A Source Book* (2008, with Margaret Carney, OSF, and Suzanne Kush, CSSF).

Although this little book is about 40 years old, it continues to deliver what its title promises: a first encounter with Francis of Assisi for those who do not know much about him, but after having seen or heard him mentioned somewhere – most of the time related to legendary stories – are intrigued by that man of a small Italian city who lived eight hundred years ago. "First Encounter with Francis of Assisi" does not have the pretention to be a biography, but is definitely a concise and solid introduction to Francis, describing the world of his time, the milestones of his journey of life, and the essential elements of his spirituality.

In addition to providing a basic outline of his life, the author explores major aspects of his continuing influence in our time. While many historic interpretations of events in his life have been uncovered since this was first published, the Franciscan Institute wants to keep this study available as a tool that can help many—particularly collaborators in Franciscan works and institutions—know this amazing Christian better.

– Sr. Margaret Carney, President – St. Bonaventure University



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Knowledge for Love: Franciscan Science as the Pursuit of Wisdom

Author: by Keith Douglass Warner, O.F.M.

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Price: \$12.00

Pages: 86

Publication Date: August 2012

Format: Paperback

Series: Franciscan Heritage Series, Volume 8

BISAC: REL 106000 RELIGION / Religion & Science

SCI 034000 SCIENCE / History

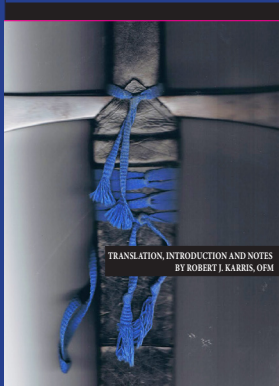
HIS 037010 HISTORY / Medieval

This essay extends the retrieval of the Franciscan intellectual tradition into the sciences by presenting the vocation and work of three Franciscan scientists. Friar Bartholomew the Englishman taught his fellow Franciscans with the best available scientific knowledge to prepare them for preaching in foreign lands. Friar Roger Bacon conducted research into the natural world to advance scientific knowledge in service of the Church. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún investigated the life, worldview and culture of the Aztec peoples in New Spain (now Mexico) to interpret these for his fellow Franciscans. In the Franciscan tradition, learning about nature helps one grow in wisdom, and thus Franciscan science is knowledge for love. This essay argues that the retrieval of our Franciscan intellectual tradition could and should include the sciences.

This is the eighth in a series intended to encompass topics which will connect the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition with today's language of our Christian Catholic Franciscan way of Gospel Life. Previous volumes have presented an overview of the tradition, discussed dimensions of creation and Christian anthropology in Franciscan theology, and illustrated them through an iconographic tradition found in the Gospel of John. It is our hope that *Knowledge for Love: Franciscan Science as the Pursuit of Wisdom* will add to our understanding of the Franciscan intellectual tradition, just as the sermons, commentaries, and treatises of Bonaventure, Scotus, or Ockham, because these stories reveal how creation is a sacrament of God's loving presence and the first book of revelation.

KEITH DOUGLASS WARNER, O.F.M. is a Franciscan Friar and serves as Director of the Center for Science, Technology and Society at Santa Clara University where he directs fellowship and grants programs, and supports STS curriculum development across the campus. He coordinates the undergraduate STS minor. He works closely with faculty to develop STS teaching capacity. Keith has an MA in Spirituality from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, and a PhD in Environmental Studies from University of California Santa Cruz.

SPIRITUAL WAREFARE
AND SIX OTHER
SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF
PETER OF JOHN OLIVI



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Spiritual Warfare and Six Other Spiritual Writings of Peter of John Olivi

Author: translation, introduction and notes by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.

ISBN: 978-1-57659-344-8

Price: \$19.95

Pages: 120

Publication Date: August, 2012

Format: Paperback

Series: N/A

BISAC: REL 099000 RELIGION / Christian Life / Spiritual Warfare

REL 051000 RELIGION / Philosophy

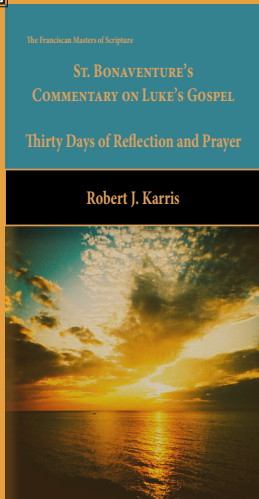
REL 062000 RELIGION / Spirituality

While Peter of John Olivi (d. 1298) is generally classified more as a theologian and/or philosopher than as a spiritual director, Robert Karris presents several short works by Olivi which clearly indicate that he was concerned for the spiritual progress of lay people, too. Besides Olivi's four spiritual writings – *The Armed Soldier*, *The Prayer of Thanksgiving*, *Lessons on Growth in the Spiritual Life* and *Remedies against Spiritual Temptations* – Karris adds his treatise on *The Lord's Prayer*, on *The Seven Sentiments of Christ Jesus*, and an abbreviated version of his commentary on *Mary's response to Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38*.

In addition to the works of Olivi, Karris provides a plethora of footnotes to aid the reader, and in an appendix he has translated two interpretive parallels to help readers see where Olivi follows traditional lines of thought and where he diverges into his own unique treatment.

For too long the temptation to dismiss Olivi as a Franciscan reformer who ran afoul of the Roman authorities after his death has kept his writings in the background of Franciscan scholarship. Now, with this short but penetrating introduction to another facet of Peter of John Olivi's ministry, Karris gives us reason to look again and find new treasures in the life of Olivi which can enrich us today.

ROBERT J. KARRIS, O.F.M., Th.D., is a Franciscan priest of the Sacred Heart Province whose headquarters are in St. Louis. He earned an S.T.L. from Catholic University of America and a Th.D. from Harvard University in New Testament and Early Church History. Fr. Karris is a former professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a former Provincial Minister of Sacred Heart Province and General Councilor of the Order of Friars Minor. Currently, he is research professor at The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University. He has been widely published and his most recent New Testament books are, *John: Stories of the Word and Faith* and *Eating Your Way through Luke's Gospel*. He is a past president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America and for the last four years he has preached in over 120 churches in the United States on behalf of the poor served by Food for the Poor. He is general editor of the 15-volume *Works of St. Bonaventure* series published by Franciscan Institute Publications. Among other books with Franciscan Institute Publications, Fr. Karris has written *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings* and has translated and edited several including, *Defense of the Mendicants* (translated by Karris and Jose de Vinck), *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* (translated by Karris and Thomas Reist, O.F.M.), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of John* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (edited by Karris and Campion Murray, O.F.M.), *In the Name of St. Francis: A History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism Until the Early Sixteenth Century* (by Grado Giovanni Merlo, translated by Karris and Raphael Bonnanno, O.F.M.).



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St. Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke's Gospel: Thirty Days of Reflection and Prayer

Author: edited by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.

ISBN: 978-1-57659-345-5

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Pages: 128

Publication Date: August, 2012

Format: Paperback

Series: N/A

BISAC: REL 006130 RELIGION / Biblical Meditations / New Testament

REL 006070 RELIGION / Biblical Commentary / New Testament

REL 012020 RELIGION / Christian Life / Devotional

Bonaventure has many insights to share not only with members of the Franciscan Family, but also with the church at large. From his work on translating and annotating St. Bonaventure's three-volume *Commentary on Luke's Gospel*, noted Scripture scholar Robert Karris has developed this book of reflections for thirty days. Playfully referring to them as "Bonaluke bites," Karris gives preferential treatment to those passages used in the Sunday lectionary during Cycle C.

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Today Lukan scholars acknowledge many "Franciscan" themes in Luke's Gospel. Members of the Franciscan Family will enjoy reacquainting themselves with the charism through the lens of Luke's Gospel. Perhaps preachers will find that old interpretations are new again and can sparkle because Bonaventure has singled out the very best from tradition to challenge our normal way of interpreting passages familiar through years of liturgical use.

ROBERT J. KARRIS, O.F.M., Th.D., is a Franciscan priest of the Sacred Heart Province whose headquarters are in St. Louis. He earned an S.T.L. from Catholic University of America and a Th.D. from Harvard University in New Testament and Early Church History. Fr. Karris is a former professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a former Provincial Minister of Sacred Heart Province and General Councillor of the Order of Friars Minor. Currently, he is research professor at The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University. He has been widely published and his most recent New Testament books are, *John: Stories of the Word and Faith and Eating Your Way through Luke's Gospel*. He is a past president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America and for the last four years he has preached in over 120 churches in the United States on behalf of the poor served by Food for the Poor. He is general editor of the 15-volume *Works of St. Bonaventure* series published by Franciscan Institute Publications. Among other books with Franciscan Institute Publications, Fr. Karris has written *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings* and has translated and edited several including, *Defense of the Mendicants* (translated by Karris and Jose de Vinck), *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* (translated by Karris and Thomas Reist, O.F.M.), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of John* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (edited by Karris and Campion Murray, O.F.M.), *In the Name of St. Francis: A History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism Until the Early Sixteenth Century* (by Grado Giovanni Merlo, translated by Karris and Raphael Bonnanno, O.F.M.).

The Franciscan Masters of Scripture

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Thirty Days of Reflection and Prayer

By Robert J. Karris



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Title: The Franciscan Masters of Scripture: *St. Bonaventure's Commentary on John's Gospel*

Author: edited by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.

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It seems that a word of general orientation is in order for those coming to Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* for the first time. Bonaventure's style of commentary consists of a detailed outline of the text, running commentary on the individual verses, and answers to questions that arise from the text.

In my selection of the Johannine passages for thirty days, I have given preferential treatment to those passages used in the liturgy during Cycle B and for Christmas, Sundays in Lent, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Sundays after Easter. Perhaps preachers may want to share with their congregations interpretations that are so old that they are new, that sparkle because Bonaventure has singled out the very best from tradition, and that challenge our hackneyed ways of interpreting a favorite passage such as Jesus' healing of a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years (John 5).

Each day is arranged in the following manner. At the beginning I tell readers what passage from John's Gospel to read and meditate upon. Then I provide Bonaventure's commentary on one or two verses of the passage under consideration. My Reflection follows Bonaventure's interpretation. In the Reflection I relate Bonaventure's commentary to the rest of the passage being interpreted, to contemporary exposition, and to themes in the rest of the Gospel. I conclude each day with a Prayer, which is meant to be a springboard for readers' own prayers.

In Thirty Days author and reader undertake a month-long pilgrimage into wisdom. Here a master of scriptural theology unites the best in contemporary scholarship with the best in medieval Franciscan contemplation on the Word of God. Karris's usual combination of a pithy and illuminating style with a deep and enriching content invites us into a feast of learning. The result for both preacher and receiver: a spiritual experience of knowledge, meditation, prayer, and application to daily life.

— Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, California

*For more than a decade, Robert J. Karris—renowned Lucan scholar—has applied his exegetical expertise to the recovery of St. Bonaventure's genius as medieval "master of the sacred page." While certain works of Bonaventure are famous treatises on theological themes (e.g., *The Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, *The Brevioquium*), his magisterial works of Scripture commentary have only recently started being available in English. Having completed the translation of Bonaventuran Commentaries on John and Luke, Fr. Karris now seeks to lead us into the mine of hidden gems of reflection. The work is itself a jewel. Short, pithy extracts of Bonaventure's writing, reflections that bridge the gap from medieval to post-modern minds, and short prayerful responses to round out a busy person's meditation on the Word. These are the clear, marvelously assembled contents of this small *vade mecum*. This "good venture" into the Seraphic Doctor's works honors the original author. If you love standing in the stream of Christian tradition experienced as "ever ancient, ever new," you will love this book.*

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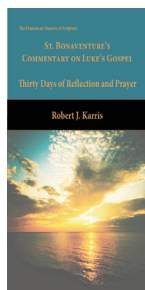
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— Michael Perry, O.F.M., Vicar General, Order of Friars Minor, Rome

ROBERT J. KARRIS, O.F.M., Th.D., is a Franciscan priest of the Sacred Heart Province whose headquarters are in St. Louis. He earned an S.T.L. from Catholic University of America and a Th.D. from Harvard University in New Testament and Early Church History. Fr. Karris is a former professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a former Provincial Minister of Sacred Heart Province and General Councilor of the Order of Friars Minor. Currently, he is research professor at The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University. He has been widely published and his most recent New Testament books are, *John: Stories of the Word and Faith and Eating Your Way through Luke's Gospel*. He is a past president of the Catholic Biblical Association of America and for the last four years he has preached in over 120 churches in the United States on behalf of the poor served by Food for the Poor. He is general editor of the 15-volume *Works of St. Bonaventure* series published by Franciscan Institute Publications. Among other books with Franciscan Institute Publications, Fr. Karris has written *The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings* and has translated and edited several including, *Defense of the Mendicants* (translated by Karris and Jose de Vinck), *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* (translated by Karris and Thomas Reist, D.F.M.), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of John* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (edited by Karris), *Bonaventure's Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (edited by Karris and Campion Murray, O.F.M.), *In the Name of St. Francis: A History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism Until the Early Sixteenth Century* (by Grado Giovanni Merlo, translated by Karris and Raphael Bonnano, O.F.M.).



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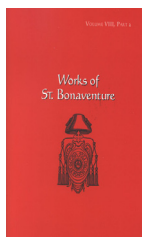
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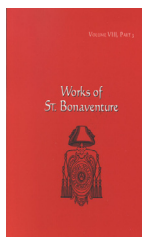


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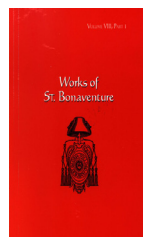


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