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Foreword

Like other parts of the country, western New York is beginning to cry out for some gentle rain. In our role as good stewards, we water the lawns, gardens, etc., but it's important that we nourish our spirits, too. And in that sense, I was edified by the participants at the OFS Quinquennial, held last week in Skokie, IL. They were so attentive to the keynote speakers, lively in their small group discussions, reverent at liturgy, and loving to all they met. It brought to mind the description of the brothers in Celano's *Life of Saint Francis*, XV:41:

> Among them ... there was great harmony, constant calm, thanksgiving, and songs of praise. These are the lessons by which the devoted father instructed ... not so much in words and speech but in deed and truth (*FA:ED* 1, 220).

I saw this description in the flesh in the gathering of the Order of Franciscans Secular last week.

On another topic, but the same theme of spiritual nourishment, we are nearing the culmination of a project that we hope you will find most useful: a cumulative index of sixty years of *The Cord*. We are currently proofing the file and then we will put the Index (by author's names) on our website for your use. We already have PDFs of each of the years' issues from 1950-2010 posted on the website. You will be able to do simple searches of the index, when completed, and then access the issue by year for the article(s) that you wish to consult. There will be a lag of about eighteen months before new issues are added to the index and the PDF files, since we are dependent on subscription revenue to cover the production expenses.

While there is no charge to access this resource, it is intended for personal use, reflection or study. If users wish to make copies for groups or committees to discuss, you do still have to get written permission from Franciscan Institute Publications to comply with copyright issues. This has taken several student workers significant hours of detailed work to bring this project to fruition. Check the website for the official announcement when it is posted. Happy researching! Daria R. Mitchell, O.S.F.

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Cover Photo shows the corner of the sisters dormitory at San Damiano where St. Clare died. The photo is used with permission. ©David Joyal, Art History Images, Portland, Oregon.

Thomas of Celano's *Life of Saint Francis*: A Christian Humanist Appraisal

John P. Bequette, Ph.D.

Introduction: Hagiography Defined

When we consider the life and example of St. Francis of Assisi, we are immediately faced with a saint who has eluded the ability of human language to convey the holiness of a man who inspired not only a preaching movement, but also an intellectual and mystical movement as well. At the heart of each of these three movements is the memory of Francis's words and example, a memory that is preserved and conveyed through hagiography. Hagiography literally means "holy writing." It is a genre of theological literature that deals with the original sources pertaining to the lives of holy men and women within a religious tradition. One of the things hagiographical literature tells us is how a saint's biographer and his contemporaries understand sanctity or holiness. In this sense, the true author of a saint's life is not limited to an individual but also includes the believing community. A saint's written life has primarily a pedagogical function in that it instructs the audience in the tradition of holiness that is normative for the religious community. This tradition of holiness as sanctioned by the community finds expression in the life of a particular saint through the responsive and creative work of the writer. In this way, the author of a saint's life conveys the *sensus fidei* as it is manifested in the person of his or her subject. The author is a spokesperson for the mind of the Church.

If the author of a saint's life is a spokesperson for the mind of the Church, then it follows that his or her narrative account should participate in some way in the general apostolate of the Church. The life of the saint should be not only instructive to the faithful, but should also convey a solid sense of the Gospel to an unbelieving world. If the life of the saint is rooted in the timeless truths of the faith, then it should at least implicitly address the questions and problems posed by our contemporary culture. It is in this connection that hagiography and Christian humanism intersect.

Christian Humanism Defined

Roman Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain has defined humanism as that which "tends essentially to render man more truly human, and to manifest his original greatness by having him participate in all that which can enrich him in nature and in history." True humanism, according to Maritain, "demands that man develop the virtualities contained within him, his creative forces and the life of reason, and to work to make the forces of the physical world instruments of his freedom."[1] Humanism is simply the attempt by men and women to realize their full potential as rational and creative beings. The proper and benign ordering of cultural, social, and political life is the way in which humanism manifests itself. If we stay with this definition, we can define Christian humanism as the attempt by men and women to realize their greatness and dignity as human beings created in the image of God, and the attempt to order the world in such a way that it reflects this greatness and preserves this dignity.

Undoubtedly the most eminent spokesperson for the Christian humanism of our time is Pope John Paul the Great. At the heart of his theological vision, first formu-

[1] Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, Joseph W. Evans, trans. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 2.

lated before he became pope and expounded fully during his long pontificate, is a Christian anthropology, which explores the profound mystery of the human person. As early as 1968, while cardinal of Krakow in Communist Poland, Karol Wojtyla wrote of his germinating theological vision. He observed a "degradation, indeed a pulverization, of the fundamental uniqueness of each human person." He also described a "disintegration planned at times by atheistic ideologies." Against this assault upon human dignity Wojtyla urged a "recapitulation of the inviolable mystery of the person."[2]

In his inaugural papal encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul gave his first intimation of the type of Christian humanism that would define his pontificate, a Christian humanism firmly rooted in the Second Vatican Council. He writes:

> In its penetrating analysis of "the modern world," the Second Vatican Council reached that most important point of the visible world that is man, by penetrating like Christ the depth of human consciousness and by making contact with the inward mystery of man, which in Biblical and non-Biblical language is expressed by the word "heart." Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the one who penetrated in a unique unrepeatable way into the mystery of man and entered his "heart." Rightly therefore does the Second Vatican Council teach: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come (Rom 5:14), Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, *fully reveals man to himself* and brings to light his most high calling.[3]

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[2] Letter to Henri de Lubac, quoted in George F. Weigel, "John Paul II and the Crisis of Humanism," *First Things*, 98 (December, 1999): 31-36.

[3] John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* II.8 (www.vatican.va).

The task of Christian humanism, creatively and forcefully expounded by John Paul II, involves the recovery of the human person as created in the image of God. This recovery is achieved in and through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, *fully reveals man to himself* and brings to light his most high calling."[4] In addition to being created in the image of God, the human person has been redeemed by Christ. These are the two equally important facets of the Christian view of the human person, and both facets must be rightly understood in order to expound fully a true Christian humanism. John Paul II articulates this facet of Christian humanism when he discusses "the human dimension of the mystery of redemption":

> The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly-and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being-he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must "appropriate" and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself.[5]

> The key to a fully restored image of God is the mystery of Christ's incarnation and passion. When one contemplates this, one is overcome with amazement at the worth of the human person that he "gained so great a Redeemer." It is this profound amazement, John Paul tells us, that "vivifies every aspect of authentic humanism."[6]

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[4] *Gaudium et Spes*, quoted in *Redemptor Hominis* (see above).
[5] *RH* II.10.
[6] *RH* II.10.

Another important dimension of John Paul's humanism is his "theology of the body," where he articulates a Christian anthropology around the concept of the total gift of the self. This gift of self expresses the fundamentally relational nature of the human person created in God's image, and it is often on this level that the erosion of the divine image reveals itself. Commenting on this dimension of John Paul II's humanism, George Weigel writes:

> John Paul II's "theology of the body," which he laid out in 130 general audience addresses between 1979 and 1984, is arguably the most creative Christian response to the sexual revolution and its "pulverization" of the human person to be articulated in the twentieth century. Its philosophical core is Wojtyla's claim that what we might call a "Law of the Gift" is built into the very structure of human being-in-the-world. Because of that, self-giving, not self-assertion, is the royal road to human flourishing.[7]

Due in large part to John Paul's influence, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* articulates a conception of the human person created in God's image that affirms the fundamentally relational nature of being human. It states:

> Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.[8]

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[7] Wiegel, 31-36.

[8] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 357.

Thus the human person reflects the very being of the Creator in that he or she possesses a threefold relational capacity. The human person has the capacity for self-knowledge, for self-possession, for interpersonal communion, and for a covenant relationship with God. The text uses several phrases in particular that indicate the relational anthropology championed by John Paul II. The human person is capable of "freely giving himself" and entering into "communion" with others. The person can also enter into a "covenant with his Creator," and can offer God a "response" of faith and love. Even self-knowledge and self-possession can be understood as relational categories, for each suggests a relationship between the person and his or her self. Thus there is not only an interpersonal relationality in the Christian view of the human person, but an intrapersonal relationality as well.

Saint Francis: Exemplar of the Christian Humanist Vision

We could say that the foundation of human dignity lay in the human person created in God's image and capable of a multidimensional relationality with self, others and God, and that the recovery or "resurrection" of this dignity is achieved by a personal appropriation of the paschal mystery. Having discussed the basic nature of hagiography and of Christian humanism, we can now proceed to an investigation of the life of St. Francis in terms of the Christian humanist vision. I contend that St. Francis presents us with an exemplar of this vision. In his life and teaching, Francis accomplishes two things. First, he manifests the Christian view of the human person in its capacity for self-knowledge, self-possession, interpersonal communion, and a covenant relationship with God. Second, Francis manifests the resurrection/recovery of the human person through his assimilation of the paschal mystery. The text I will be examining is the

Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano. Three sections in particular call for our attention: Francis's conversion, in which he evidences the recovery of human relationality in his embodiment of evangelical poverty; Francis's preaching ministry, in which he extends this relationality into the Christian community and beyond; and Francis's reception of the stigmata, in which he embodies the assimilation of the paschal mystery.

In the conversion sequence, Thomas presents Francis as the personification of self-knowledge and self-possession that characterize the human person created in God's image. Thomas tells us that Francis spent his youth in Assisi living the life of a prodigal. Francis was "not a hoarder of money but a squanderer of his property, a prudent dealer but a most unreliable steward."[9] Francis's chief vice is the irresponsible use of created goods. Thus he expended his life and substance. Thomas tells us that Francis, "with his crowded procession of misfits he used to strut about impressively and in high spirits, making his way through the streets of Babylon."[10] Francis is a vain, wasteful youth. He becomes afflicted with an illness, which Thomas calls "the divine vengeance, or rather the divine anointing," and while recovering begins to reflect critically upon his hedonistic lifestyle:

> He began to mull over within himself things that were not usual for him. When he had recovered a little and, with the support of a can, had begun to walk about here and there through the house in order to regain his health, he went outside one day and began to gaze upon the surrounding countryside with greater interest. But the beauty of the fields, the delight of the vineyards, and whatever

[9] Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, in *Francis of Assisi – The Saint: Early Documents*, Vol. 1, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., and William Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 1999), 183; further references will use *FA:ED* followed by volume and page number.

[10] *FA:ED* 1, 184.

> else was beautiful to see could offer him no delight at all. He wondered at the sudden change in himself, and considered those who loved these things to be quite foolish.[11]

Due to a bodily illness, Francis begins a phase of intense introspection and self-examination, which suggests an emerging consciousness of his relationship to his own self. His self-knowledge is experiencing a sense of disquiet in the face of those things by which he had previously been identified: the beauty and enjoyment of created things. And yet his vanity has very strong hold upon his own sense of self. After he fully recovers, Francis resolves to go on a military expedition to the neighboring town of Apulia "to enrich himself in money or distinction."[12] But then one night he experiences a vision in which Francis's house was filled with military weapons and armor. Puzzled at the meaning of the vision, Francis was told that the arms "were to be for him and his soldiers."[13] Francis interprets the vision to be a portent of military success. Yet he finds himself less eager to go through with the military expedition. The sense of disquiet instilled in him by his illness has not dissipated, but has only intensified. "His spirit" Thomas tells us, "was not moved by these things in its usual way. In fact, he had to force himself to carry out his plans and undertake the journey he had desired."[14] Francis now begins to experience a sense of self-alienation. He has a vague desire for vainglory, the residual effect of his old life of carnal dissipation, and yet he is unable to wholly commit himself to its realization. He is now double-minded. At this point Thomas indicates that Francis has had a personal experience of Jesus Christ and is, in fact, now joined to Christ. Francis is "anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self."[15] He

[11] *FA:ED* 1, 185.
[12] *FA:ED* 1, 185.
[13] *FA:ED* 1, 186.
[14] *FA:ED* 1, 186.
[15] *FA:ED* 1, 187.

has connected with Christ, discovered a covenant relationship with God. This discovery Thomas describes as a hidden treasure, "the pearl [Francis] had found."[16] From here the other relational dimensions of the image of God begin to emerge. Francis finally refuses to go on the expedition, and retreats back to Assisi to ponder the new direction his life has taken. Taking a close friend with him, Francis retires to a grotto near the city, spending his days in intense prayer and discernment. Thomas writes:

> He prayed with all his heart that the eternal and true God guide his way and teach him to do His will. He endured great suffering in his soul, and he was not able to rest until he accomplished in action what he had conceived in his heart. Different thoughts followed one after another, and their relentlessness severely disturbed him.... He repented that he had sinned so grievously and that he had offended the eyes of majesty. While his past and present transgressions no longer delighted him, he was not yet fully confident of refraining from future ones. Therefore, when he came back out to his companion, he was so exhausted from his struggle that one person seemed to have entered, and another to have come out.[17]

Francis's sense of self-alienation has intensified. At the heart of the struggle is his capacity for self-possession. He desires to live a life in obedience to God, yet he is unsure of the steadfastness of his own will. Some time later, however, God gives Francis the confidence he needs. "One day," Thomas tells us, "when he had invoked the Lord's mercy with his whole heart, the Lord showed him what he must do."[18] Francis journeys to the town of Foligno, and there sells cloth from his father's business with the intention of donating it to someone in need. He

[16] *FA:ED* 1, 187.
[17] *FA:ED* 1, 187-88.
[18] *FA:ED* 1, 188.

then starts to return to Assisi, wondering what to do with the money. It is at this point that we see the first intimation of Francis as the exemplar of evangelical poverty. Thomas writes:

> In a wonderful way, in an instant, he turned completely to the work of God. Feeling the heavy weight of carrying the money even for an hour, and reckoning all its benefit to be like so much sand, he hurried to get rid of it.[19]

On his way back to Assisi, Francis comes upon the dilapidated church of San Damiano. He offers the money to the priest, but the priest refuses out of fear of Francis's father. After being allowed to stay at the church, Francis throws the moneybag onto a windowsill, "since he cared for it as much as he cared for dust."[20]

Upon hearing of his son's recent activities, Francis's father is enraged. He searches for Francis, eventually overtakes him, and drags him home where he imprisons Francis in a dark place. "Striving to bend Francis's will to his own," Thomas tells us, "he badgered him, beat him, and bound him."[21] Francis's mother, however, releases her poor son. His imprisonment at his own home seems to have had a vivifying effect on Francis. Thomas writes:

> Thanking Almighty God, he quickly returned to the place he had been before. Since he had passed the test of temptations, he now enjoyed greater freedom. Throughout these many struggles, he began to exhibit a more joyful appearance. From the injuries inflicted he received a more confident spirit and, now free to go anywhere, he moved about with even greater heart.[22]

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[19] *FA:ED* 1, 189.
[20] *FA:ED* 1, 190.
[21] *FA:ED* 1, 192.
[22] *FA:ED* 1, 192-93.

On account of the persecution Francis has suffered, he is now more confident in his new vocation. His sense of self-alienation is being overcome as he gains a greater clarity of his calling and a greater confidence in his own ability to withstand temptation. The image of God in Francis, marred by his former life of dissipation and vanity, has been partially but substantially restored in his capacity for self-knowledge and self-possession, each of which is evidenced in the greater clarity and greater confidence he has come to experience.

Francis's calling is a life of evangelical poverty. He comes to the full realization of what this means when his father drags him before Bishop Guido of Assisi, demanding that Francis renounce his right of inheritance and return all his property. Francis eagerly acquiesces, giving his father the very clothes off his back. Thomas writes:

> When he was in front of the bishop, he neither delayed nor hesitated, indeed, he neither waited for nor uttered words, but immediately took off and threw down all his clothes and returned them to his father. He did not even keep his trousers on, and he was completely stripped bare before everyone.[23]

The bishop responds to Francis's action by covering him with his own mantle. He knew that this action "contained a mystery." "Cherishing and comforting him," Thomas tells us, "he embraced him in the depths of charity."[24] In response to the signification of holy poverty in Francis, the bishop embraces him, signifying close personal communion and thus an even fuller restoration of the image of God, this time in the communion between Francis and the bishop. Having discovered the treasure or "pearl" of Jesus Christ, which signifies a restoration of a covenant relationship with God, Francis has experienced a substantial restoration of the image of God with-

[23] *FA:ED* 1, 193.
[24] *FA:ED* 1, 194.

in himself. He has recovered his self-knowledge and self-possession in his clear understanding of his vocation and his confidence of remaining steadfast thereunto. Finally he has experienced a sense of interpersonal communion in the loving embrace of the bishop. Accompanying this restoration is Francis's total commitment to evangelical poverty. At the root of an authentic, fully human life is the poverty of the Gospel.

Having become the very embodiment of evangelical poverty, Francis is now ready to undertake the ministry to which God has called him. At first, he spends his time ministering to lepers and the poor. Thomas tells us that Francis "fixed this in his heart: to the best of his ability, never to deny anything to anyone begging from him for God's sake." Thomas continues:

> This he did and with such care that he offered himself completely, in every way, first practicing before teaching the gospel counsel: "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."[25]

At about the same time, Francis rebuilds the church of San Damiano, which later will become the dwelling of the Order of Poor Ladies led by St Clare. Later, he rebuilds the church of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, where he and his brothers later adopt a small dwelling known as the Portiuncula, or "little portion." Francis's vocation at this point seems to be to alleviate the plight of the poor, both poor people and poor churches.

One day, however, while listening to the reading of the Gospel relating how Christ sent out his disciples to preach, Francis asked the priest to interpret the passage for him. Here Francis realizes his calling to preach the Gospel. Thomas writes:

[25] *FA:ED* 1, 196.

> When he heard that Christ's disciples should not possess gold or silver or money, or carry on their journey a wallet or a sack, nor bread nor a staff, not to have shoes nor two tunics, but that they should preach the kingdom of God and penance, the holy man, Francis, immediately exulted in the spirit of God. "This is what I want," he said, "this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart."[26]

Thomas tells us that Francis "hastened to implement the words of salvation." He took off his shoes, discarded his staff, took only one tunic, and traded his leather belt for a simple cord. Francis then made for himself tunic bearing the image of the cross. Thomas writes that Francis "made it very rough, so that in he might crucify the flesh with its vices and sins. He made it very poor and plain, a thing that the world would never covet."[27] What is notable here is the allusion to Francis's assimilation of the passion of Christ, which will characterize the consummation of his life.

From here Francis begins his preaching ministry. When Thomas narrates Francis's preaching, we see a particular development of the capacity for interpersonal communion that characterizes the Christian view of the human person. Thomas tells us that Francis's preaching "was like a blazing fire, reaching the deepest parts of the heart, and filling the souls of all with wonder."[28] Francis's words have a communicating power that reaches to the most intimate depths of his hearers. His words touch the seat of the very self, transforming the person inwardly and establishing interpersonal communion with one's neighbor. Thomas writes:

> In all his preaching, before he presented the word of God to the assembly, he prayed for peace, say-

[26] *FA:ED* 1, 201-02.
[27] *FA:ED* 1, 202.
[28] *FA:ED* 1, 202.

> ing "May the Lord give you peace." He always proclaimed this to men and women, to those he met and to those who met him. Accordingly, many who hated peace along with salvation, with the Lord's help wholeheartedly embraced peace. They became themselves children of peace, now rivals for eternal salvation.[29]

With the image of God having been restored in him, Francis has now become a means of bringing about reconciliation within the Christian community. Thomas uses the metaphor of the natural countryside to reflect this newfound peace and orderliness. Thomas tells us that Francis "gleamed like a shining star in the darkness of night, and like the morning spread over the darkness." He continues:

> Thus in a short time, the appearance of the entire region was changed and, once rid of its earlier ugliness, it revealed a happier expression everywhere. The former dryness was put to rout and crop sprang up quickly in the untilled field. Even the uncultivated vine began to produce buds with a sweet-smell for the Lord, and when it had produced flowers of sweetness, it brought forth equally the fruit of honor and respectability.[30]

The important things to notice in this passage are the phrases "untilled field" and "uncultivated vine." Both of these yield fruit even though they had previously been neglected. Francis's preaching, rooted in his recovery of the image of God, brings forth spiritual "produce" in those areas of Christian society that have been neglected by other ministers.

Later in the narrative, Thomas demonstrates that the interpersonal communion effected by Francis's preaching extends beyond the Christian community. In the middle

[29] *FA:ED* 1, 203.
[30] *FA:ED* 1, 216.

of the Crusades, Francis travels to Syria in order to meet with the Sultan, intending to preach the Gospel and hoping to die a martyr's death. He is abused by the Saracens until he brought before the Sultan, who treats Francis graciously. The Sultan first tests Francis by offering him money. Francis refuses the offer. Thomas then relates how Francis's preaching affects the Sultan. He writes:

> But when he saw that [Francis] resolutely scorned all these things like dung, the Sultan was overflowing with admiration and recognized him as a man unlike any other. He was moved by his words and listened to him very willingly.[31]

On account of Francis's example, specifically his commitment to evangelical poverty, two individuals of radically opposed faiths and cultures experience peace. Significantly, the Sultan recognized Francis "as a man unlike any other." In Francis's commitment to poverty the Sultan recognizes his uniqueness as a person. Thus we have in Francis a foreshadowing of the particularly personalist Christian humanism advocated by John Paul II. Francis's humanism is so powerful, in fact, that it foils his attempt at martyrdom. Thomas writes: "In all this, however, the Lord did not fulfill his desire, reserving for him the prerogative of a unique grace."[32]

This unique grace is the stigmata, impressed upon the flesh of Francis two years before he died. He receives the stigmata as the consummation of a life spent in service and self-giving. Francis reaches a point in his life where he desires to perfectly fulfill the will of God. Thomas writes: "This man, having the spirit of God, was ready to endure any suffering of mind and bear any affliction of the body, if at last he would be given the choice that the will of the heavenly Father might be fulfilled mercifully in him."[33] Finally, while staying at a hermitage on Mount La

[31] *FA:ED* 1, 231.
[32] *FA:ED* 1, 231.
[33] *FA:ED* 1, 262.

Verna, Francis experiences a vision of a six-winged seraph in the form of a crucified man. Thomas writes:

> He saw in the vision of God a man, having six wings like a Seraph, standing over him, arms extended and feet joined, affixed to a cross. Two of his wings were raised up, two were stretched out over his head as if for flight, and two covered his whole body. When the blessed servant of the most High saw these things, he was filled with the greatest awe, but could not decide what this vision meant for him.... The Seraph's beauty was beyond comparison, but the fact that the Seraph was fixed to the cross and the bitter suffering of that passion thoroughly frightened him. Consequently, he got up both sad and happy as joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart. Concerned over the matter, he kept thinking about what this vision could mean and his spirit was anxious to discern a sensible meaning for the vision.[34]

While gazing at the crucified Seraph, Francis ponders the significance of the vision. He specifically wants to know what the vision means "for him." He notices the beauty of the Seraph contrasted with "the bitter suffering of that passion," a visage that affects Francis at the very core of his person: "joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart." At a loss for understanding the significance of the vision, he desires "a sensible meaning." This sensible meaning immediately comes to Francis in his own flesh:

> While he was unable to perceive anything clearly understandable from the vision, its newness very much pressed upon his heart. Signs of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man hovering over him.[35]

[34] *FA:ED* 1, 204-05.
[35] *FA:ED* 1, 264.

In addition to receiving the wounds in his hands and feet, Francis receives in his side the same wound by which Christ's own side was pierced: "His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood."[36] Having been the embodiment of evangelical poverty, Francis is now the embodiment of the passion of Christ.

Later in the narrative Thomas reveals what he believes to be the theological significance of the stigmata: they serve to unite Francis's own sufferings with those of Christ. This suffering intensifies when Francis develops a disease of the eyes. Thomas writes:

> His noble spirit was aimed at heaven and he only desired to be set free and to be with Christ. But he had not yet filled up in his flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, even though he bore the marks on his body. So God multiplied his mercy on him, and he contracted a serious disease of the eyes.[37]

Francis had desired during his conversion to "keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self." He has appropriated Christ, has been perfectly conformed to his image, as signified by the stigmata. He must now finally live out this appropriation in his own suffering. While his physical suffering is most evident, Francis keeps the signs of his suffering hidden from the brothers during the remaining days of his life. Upon his death, the brothers and the all the faithful discover the stigmata, a discovery which brought an "incredible joy" which "lightened their grief." Moreover, they notice something about Francis's countenance. Thomas writes:

> They looked at his skin which was black before but was now shining white in its beauty, promising the

[36] *FA:ED* 1, 264.
[37] *FA:ED* 1, 267.

> rewards of the blessed resurrection. They saw his face like the face of an angel, as if he were not dead, but alive.... All the people saw him glowing with remarkable beauty and his flesh became even whiter than before. It was even more wonderful for them to see in the middle of his hands and feet not just the holes of the nails, but the nails themselves formed by his own flesh, retaining the dark color of iron, and his right side red with blood. These signs of martyrdom did not provoke horror, but added beauty and grace, like little black stones in a white pavement.[38]

Thomas tells us that Francis's face was "like the face of an angel." What Francis's mourners see lying before them is what Francis saw at Mount La Verna: an angel in cruciform. Francis has himself become the crucified Seraph. In addition, his body lay there "as if he were not dead, but alive," and "promising the rewards of the blessed resurrection." In the body of Francis we see the embodiment of the fully redeemed human being who has appropriated within himself the passion and resurrection of Christ. Harkening back to John Paul's discussion of "the human dimension of the mystery of redemption," we are reminded that if a person wishes to fully understand himself, to fully recover the significance of his own being, he must "draw near to Christ," he must "enter into him with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption." Francis has done precisely this.

Conclusion

In this study we have examined the Life of St. Francis from a Christian humanist perspective. This perspective assumes the fundamental dignity of the human person

[38] *FA:ED* 1, 280.

as created in the image of God and redeemed in Christ. The person as created in God's image possesses the capacity for a relationship with the self, with others, and with God. As John Paul II instructs us, however, this image and the mystery it contains can only be recovered through a personal appropriation of the paschal mystery. We encounter this in the life of Francis. In his conversion, after having discovered the treasure or "pearl" of Jesus Christ, Francis experiences a restoration of his humanity on the levels of self-knowledge, self-possession, and communion with others. In his preaching ministry, Francis extends this restoration to his fellow human beings, incorporating both Christians and non-Christians into interpersonal communion. Finally, in the reception of the stigmata Francis achieves the full restoration of his own humanity when he completes what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, particularly in his disease of the eyes, and becomes fully united to his Crucified Lord. In his own death he paradoxically exhibits his fully recovered, fully human life. Francis has personally appropriated the paschal mystery; thus he is the exemplar of the Christian view of the human person.

What then, is the particular form of the Christian humanism exhibited in the life of St. Francis? In the example of the Poverello we learn that authentic Christian humanism begins with evangelical poverty and ends with our personal appropriation of Christ crucified. We are called to embrace the poverty of the Gospel in our own lives, caring for material things "as if they were dust." It is in this embrace of poverty that we begin to recover the image of God within ourselves in all its intensive intrapersonal relationality. We are called to act upon this restored image in our contacts with others, cooperating with God in restoring interpersonal communion in those communities in which we find ourselves. Finally, we are called to participate personally in the sufferings of Christ, to "complete what is lacking" in his sufferings by uniting our own suffering to his. In this way, each of us in our own particular suffering, which bears the imprint of our

individual personality, will in some way manifest the redemptive suffering of our Lord, becoming an almost sacramental means of grace for others whereby they too can "assimilate" the paschal mystery.

"The Words That I Have Spoken to You Are Spirit and Life" (John 6:63): A Franciscan Approach to Scripture

Salvatore Cordaro, O.F.M. Cap.

Sacred Scripture looms large within Franciscan tradition, originating with the deep reverence that Francis of Assisi himself had for the written Word of God. The story is told of Francis coming into a possession of a copy of the New Testament and immediately pulling apart the pages of the book and distributing them so that all his brothers could have access to the treasure that was present on every page.[1] For Francis, as well as for subsequent generations of his followers and the theological school that was profoundly influenced by his Gospel vision, the Scriptures were not only the media through which information about Jesus Christ was available but also a privileged means of communicating the new life that was engendered by the Christ event.

Francis's characterization of himself as an "ignorant, uneducated person" (LtOrd 39) was clearly exaggerated. He was able to read and write, unlike the vast majority of his contemporaries, but he was never interested in pursuing a formal theological education. Francis's pointed comment about his intellectual ability most likely arose from his concern that the rapidly growing number of friars who were engaged in theological training at the universities were running the risk of losing "the spirit of prayer

[1] Bonaventure, "Letter in Response to an Unknown Master," 10, cited in Dominic Monti, "Do the Scriptures Make a Difference in Our Lives?" in *Franciscans and the Scriptures: Living the Word of God*, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2005 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2006), 1.

and devotion to which all things should be subservient" (LR 5:2) by focusing too much on the letter of the biblical texts and disregarding their revelatory potentiality. Francis exhorted his followers to respect all true preachers, that is, "those theologians and those who minister the most holy divine words… as those who minister spirit and life to us." (Test 13; cf. John 6:63); false teachers are those who "are killed by the letter" (of Scripture because they) "do not wish to follow the Spirit of Sacred Scripture but only wish to know what the words are and how to interpret them to others" (Adm 7:3).

Francis's project was to live and to model a life that was simply this: "To observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (LR 1:1). In other words, for Francis the Gospel was a way of life that enabled a believer to pattern his or her life on Jesus Christ and thereby enter into communion with him. Francis showed a great admiration for every aspect of Jesus' historical life, especially for his spirit of poverty and for his obedience to the Father, but he never endorsed a slavish, literal following of Jesus' lifestyle and activity. Rather, Francis advocated going beyond a literal reading of the biblical texts toward an analogical understanding that incarnated Jesus' manner of living and approach to the world in contexts very different from the originating one. Thus Francis wanted his followers to read/hear the Scriptures:

> for direction as to how to live their life, not in a new direction necessarily, but in a way that confirmed for them how God was already at work in their lives. They were bringing something to the reading of the text, i.e. the way their lives were being transformed by God's inspiration.[2]

The writings attributed to Francis are suffused with quotations from the Scriptures, with certain texts (e.g. the

[2] Monti, "Do the Scriptures Make a Difference …," 7-8.

so-called "*Proto-Rule,*" the *Office of the Passion*, several of the *Admonitions*) being composed of little more than scripture passages. Still, these writings illustrate the extent to which Francis was able to absorb and then internalize the words and themes of Scripture and then appropriate them to present his unique vision. For example, Francis's celebrated *Canticle of the Creatures* ("Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun…") went beyond the prophet Daniel's canticle of the three young men in the furnace (Dan. 3:52-90), "Francis calling on human beings to praise God *because and by means of* the wonderful creatures God has created – all of which manifest God's glory in their unique ways."[3]

It was claimed that at a certain point Francis had no more need to read Scripture: "It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture, and it is good to seek the Lord our God in them. But I have already taken in so much Scripture that I have more than enough for meditating and reflecting. I do not need more – *I know Christ*, poor and crucified" (2Cor 71:105) (italics mine). Thus it is important to remember that the experience of God came first for Francis – Scripture only gave voice to what he was at first unable to articulate and then became the instrument by which he could communicate that experience and its radical implications to his followers. The theologian and medieval historian Bernard McGinn has called Francis a "vernacular theologian" in that his theological authority came not from involvement in monasticism or in scholastic speculation but instead from an experience of God that was primarily about God's relation to the world.[4] Thus Francis could assert that God could indeed be found in the midst of the world and that the Incarnation was the paradigm through which the humility of God could be understood and appropriated in one's own life.

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[3] Dominic Monti, "Francis as Vernacular Theologian," in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2001 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 36.

[4] Monti, "Francis as Vernacular Theologian," 28.

The basic themes of Franciscanism – divine love, the primacy of Christ, reverence for all creation, the dignity of human nature, sacramentality of creation – were all present in Scripture but it was ultimately a matter of the particular focus Francis gave to his reading and interpretation the texts.[5] To be more precise, Francis never claimed his interpretations were the only or most relevant ones. Rather Francis saw the entirety of the biblical witness through the lens of the Incarnation (and thus of the humility of God) and then used particular texts to illustrate that foundational theme in his instructions to his followers.

Conscious of Francis's profound appreciation for Scripture and its role in his articulation of the order's rule and philosophy, later generations of Franciscans often had difficulty in trying to determine just how to interpret Francis's own writings in order to remain faithful to his vision. For example, the "Spiritual controversy" of the late thirteenth and fourteenth century was concerned with how Francis's writings on poverty should be interpreted and lived out in light of the rapidly evolving forms of life that were coming about as a result of the new challenges and realities facing the order. For Peter John Olivi and the other Spirituals, a literal reading of Scripture and of the writings of Francis was necessary in order to correctly understand the vision of Francis and the way of life Francis had proposed. However, the majority of Franciscans over the centuries have rejected such a literal reading of either the foundational Scriptural texts or the writings of Francis, instead seeing them as creating a paradigm through which future followers of Francis could re-appropriate his spirit and incarnate his vision in widely diverse contexts.

The so-called "Franciscan School," while originating in the university system of the medieval period and ad-

[5] Ilia Delio, "The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Contemporary Concerns," in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,* Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2001 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 5.

dressing itself primarily to the academic community, still has had a major impact on the development of Franciscan thought and on how the ethos and worldview of Francis have been communicated through the centuries. Especially with Bonaventure, the so-called "second founder of the Franciscans," the theological insights on poverty and humility of the school are what later understandings were in large part based on. This is because these theologians, in continuity with patristic theologians, interpreted Scripture in four different ways: literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical.[6] For Bonaventure at least, Scripture was the key to all reality that only needed to be entered into with the desire to know Christ crucified:

> Scripture, then, deals with the whole universe: the highest and the lowest, the first and the last, and everything that comes between. In a sense, it takes the form of an intelligible cross on which the entire world machine can be described and in some way seen in the light of the mind.[7]

The thought of Duns Scotus combines reflection on the biblical witness of God's relationship to creation with philosophical and doctrinal insights. A primary focus of Scotus's biblical exegesis was the covenantal relationship between God and the world that was fulfilled in the Incarnation of the Word.[8] Going against the prevalent atonement theory articulated by Anselm, Scotus and other members of the Franciscan School proposed a theory that said that the Incarnation of the Word of God would have occurred even if the fall of humanity had never happened.

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[6] Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), 189-90.

[7] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, Prologue 6:4, Works of St. Bonaventure IX (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2005), 22.

[8] Mary Beth Ingham, "John Dun Scotus: Retrieving a Medieval Thinker for Contemporary Theology" in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2001 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002), 98-99.

This positive take on salvation and on human nature and dignity profoundly influenced subsequent generations of Franciscan thinkers and assured that Franciscans would read (and preach) the New Testament primarily through the lens of God's goodness and desire to raise up humanity and not through the lens of sin and human depravity.

Francis's profound love of Scripture lives on in the desire of all Franciscans to make the Gospel the defining principle of communal life, spirituality, and the apostolate. Franciscans of all types, from the most contemplative to the most active, read Scripture to listen to the Word of God and to make it the guiding principle in their lives. The experience of God that is foundational for all Franciscans is enriched through Scripture and Scripture becomes the meeting place for the believer and God, inviting the believer into a deeper and more God-centered life.

One day while he was devoutly hearing a Mass
of the Apostles, the Gospel was read
in which Christ sends out his disciples to preach
and gives them the Gospel form of life, ...
Hearing, understanding and committing this to memory,
this friend of apostolic poverty was then overwhelmed with an indescribable joy.
"This is what I want," he said, "this is what I desire with all my heart!"

The Major Legend of Saint Francis
Chapter Three, 1
FA:ED 2, 542.

Finding Francis on Facebook: Franciscan Spirituality and Mission in the Digital Age

Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M.

I. Introduction[1]

On September 4, 2011, the *New York Times* ran an article that bore the title, "Facebook Page for Jesus, With Highly Active Fans."[2] The story focused on the hobby of a North Carolina doctor who was the son of a southern preacher. Having begun using Facebook in 2009 to promote his diet book and online diet business, Aaron Tabor, who is forty-one-years-old, decided to create a Facebook page titled "Jesus Daily" (a title that is now trademarked), through which Tabor "draws on the words of Jesus and posts them four or five times a day." What captured the attention of the *Times* was that in recent months "more people have 'Liked,' commented on and shared content on the "Jesus Daily" than on any other Facebook page, including Justin Bieber's page."[3]

On one hand, it is not all that surprising that a webpage dedicated to Jesus Christ could boast of more than eight million "fans," given that Christianity is, for the time being at least, still the largest religion on the planet. Yet, on the other hand, we are left wondering what the short and long-term implications of new social media might be

[1] This essay was first delivered as the 2011 Franciscan Week Lecture at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City (October 2, 2011).

[2] Jennifer Preston, "Facebook Page for Jesus, With Highly Active Fans," *New York Times* (September 4, 2011).

[3] Data provided by AllFacebook.com as cited in Preston, "Facebook Page for Jesus."

for religion in the twenty-first century. In the same article the *Times* makes a similar observation:

> Facebook and other social media tools have changed the way people communicate, work, find each other and fall in love. While it's too early to say that social media have transformed the way people practice religion, the number of people discussing faith on Facebook has significantly increased in the last year, according to company officials.[4]

It seems that nearly everyone can agree that almost every aspect of our lives has been impacted in one form or another by technology in this time that I will refer to as the digital age. It also seems safe to say that technology has inexorably impacted the way we think about and practice our faith. While there is much to be said about how technology is impacting various world religions, and even Christianity in its broadest sense, I am interested today in exploring some of the ways the Franciscan tradition might engage or be attentive to the shifting social, emotional, and spiritual contexts of this age.

Among the many ways such a consideration might proceed, I propose taking a look at three areas of Franciscan spirituality and mission in light of our technologically hegemonic era, attempting along the way to hold together both the centuries-old tradition of the Franciscan movement inaugurated with Francis and Clare of Assisi in the early thirteenth century *and* the immediate reality of our contemporary experience, respecting both the positive and negative dimensions present within such a matrix. The three areas include (a) our evangelical and missionary vocation, (b) our tradition's constitutive renunciation of power, and (c) the centrality of the Incarnation and blessing of embodiment in our spirituality. Coincidentally, these three thematic foci also represent three very different engagements between the Franciscan tradition

[4] Preston, "Facebook Page for Jesus."

and contemporary culture. The first is what I would call a positive exhortation, the second is a cautionary tale, and the third is a challenge to the Christian and broader communities concerning technology from a Franciscan perspective. This lecture will therefore not be an explicit endorsement, nor will it be a condemnation of new social media, the latest technology or anything of the sort. On the contrary, like so much of the Catholic Christian tradition, I believe the wisdom of the Franciscan movement offers us a nuanced "both/and" approach to authentically living out our spirituality and following our mission in a digital age.

II. The Franciscan Evangelical and Missionary Vocation

"And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel," says Francis of Assisi in his *Testament,* written near the end of his life while looking back over his experience of living in this world.[5] At the heart of the Franciscan way of being in the world stands this simple summary statement: *Franciscan* life is *Gospel* life. So central is this evangelical quality of living in the world that the *Rule*, or official way of life, of the Order of Friars Minor begins with this same description, stating rather succinctly that "the Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity."[6] The Franciscan First Order, or friars minor, is not unique among the manifold branches of the Franciscan family in this regard, for each part of the broader community – religious and secular, male and

[5] Francis of Assisi, "The Testament," v. 14, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, eds. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1999-2001), 1, 125. Hereafter cited as *FA:ED* followed by volume and page numbers.

[6] Francis of Assisi, *Regula bullata*, c. 1, v. 1, in *FA:ED* 1, 100.

female – includes this Gospel or evangelical imperative as the starting point for its way of living in the world. The second part is an elucidation of this general evangelical vocation, more clearly expressing how the given branch of the Franciscan family is to live the Gospel. For the friars this means professing the three evangelical counsels or vows.

In looking at the foundation of the Franciscan movement, we have to remember that Francis of Assisi had no intention of creating a religious community. His spiritual experience was very much a matter of individual conversion, a change of life that reflected what was happening to him personally. Franciscan scholar Regis Armstrong has often remarked that what Francis was seeking in his particular way of living in the world stemmed from his Baptismal vocation, the call that all Christians receive by virtue of entering into the Body of Christ through the Sacraments of initiation.[7] Francis was interested, first and foremost, in how to live rightly in this life, which meant striving to follow more authentically Jesus' instruction in the Gospel. What quickly happened, however, was that others witnessed this change in the life and attitude of this young man from Assisi. They too "wanted in," and began approaching Francis for advice and to inquire about the possibility of joining him to pursue a similar course of Gospel life. It was then, confronted with an unexpected "change in plans," that Francis appears to have first realized the need to organize some sort of description of the way of life of this new band of penitents.

Everything that is used to describe this particular way of living in the world that would come to be known as Franciscan is predicated on, or refers back to, *observing the Holy Gospel*. Franciscan scholar Michael Blastic explains that in the original Latin, the word *observare* bears the sense of contemplation or gazing upon, and not to observe as one might conceive the verb in a juridical sense

[7] Regis Armstrong and Ingrid Peterson, *The Franciscan Tradition*, Spirituality in History Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2010), xi.

(e.g., "observe the letter of the law").[8] A Franciscan's life, therefore, is to be marked by continual contemplation, reflection and emulation of the Gospel. The way of life is not about particular tasks, responsibilities, duties or rules (although they certainly exist and rightly so), but about the style of living in whatever context one finds him or her self.

Very early on in the newly emerging Franciscan movement there was a desire on the part of some of the brothers to move beyond the geographical confines of their community near Assisi, Italy, to other parts of the known world. This, in a sense, mirrored Francis's own lived example of transcending the interpersonal and cultural confines of his society and class. One of the most startling aspects of Francis's early conversion story was his sudden willingness to embrace the outcast and marginalized, oftentimes depicted as lepers. Such was also the case later in life when Francis and a companion crossed the threshold of the Muslim world to peaceably engage the Sultan in prayerful, constructive, and fraternal dialogue at a time when the Western Christian world was at war with the Muslims. Whether it was a more explicit rendering of the Gospel imperative to "go out to all the nations" (Matt 28) that Francis sought to live out or simply a result of the freedom that comes with openness to total-life transformation that arises from a commitment to live a radically evangelical life, Francis and his brothers often traversed the borders of lands, religions, cultures in order to establish and support relationships in new territories.

This is what we might call the missionary vocation of the Franciscan way of life. Emerging from a commitment to follow in "the teaching and footprints of Jesus Christ,"[9] this is a disposition that orients the believer outward and toward others as opposed to inward and focused on the self. Like Jesus in the Gospels, Francis saw an inherent

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[8] Michael Blastic, *A Study of the Rule of 1223: History, Exegesis and Reflection* (New York: Holy Name Province, 2008), 16.

[9] Francis of Assisi, *Regula non bullata*, c. 1, v. 1, in *FA:ED* 1, 63-64.

value in not acquiring the security and comfort afforded by the appropriation of property, resources, and status. Made emblematic in his renunciation of his father's wealth and social position, Francis rejected the structures and system that defined relationship in his day, which elevated certain families to nobility and wealth, while subjugating others to marginalized and powerless statuses of poverty and social dislocation.

The Franciscan historian Dominic Monti has described this beginning of this movement of Francis and the early brothers as the concrete expression of their desire to "dwell physically apart from 'the world,' in a remote, abandoned place on the edge of settled Assisi," a geographic location that externally illustrated what the friars sought to live spiritually as those committed to a life of solidarity among the disenfranchised of their day.[10] Monti continues:

> Instead of accepting the society driven by the quest for power and wealth in which they had been born and bred, the brothers deliberately chose to "follow the humility and poverty of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This was the only way they felt they could escape the vicious circle in which their contemporaries were caught and which prevented them from opening their hearts to God and each other.[11]

Thus began the paradigmatic expression of ministry and lifestyle that would become characteristic of the Franciscan tradition. The friars were always and everywhere committed to standing at the margins of society in order to enter into relationship with those for whom ordinary means of social interaction was prevented, forbidden or abridged.

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[10] Dominic Monti, *Francis and His Brothers: A Popular History of the Franciscan Friars* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008), 19.

[11] Monti, *Francis and His Brothers*, 20.

The friars saw in the call to live the *vita evangelica* a mandate that compelled them to missionary activity. It is important to recall that, despite the very real concerns and ill effects of the history of colonialization in our world, the term mission finds its origin in the ordered and intentional "sending forth" of a person or community for a particular political, religious, or social goal. The Gospel, as it were, was that which sent the friars minor forth into the world to serve the Church, which is the Body of Christ, in a particular way.

The *modus operandi* of the brothers was always that of solidarity. Elsewhere I have written about some of the constitutive characteristics of what we might call "Franciscan ministry," among which is counted "humble service:"[12]

> This spirit of humility acts as the foundation for all subsequent characteristics that compose a Franciscan approach to ministry. Francis was less concerned about *what* someone did in the world than about *how* someone did it. Here we see the saint's admiration for the humility of Christ emerge as part of the centerpiece of his spirituality; to be a Franciscan is to live the Gospel by following in the footprints of Jesus Christ. Michael Blastic summarized this well when he wrote, "As Jesus turned toward those around him, so Francis and Clare in contemplation and compassion incarnate the praxis of Jesus as they follow him in their world by turning to those around them." From the Incarnation and birth to death on the Cross, Jesus's life served as Francis's model for humble service.[13]

This prioritization of humility in ministry and living the world allowed Francis and his brothers to interact with all sorts of people, just as Christ had. The Francis-

[12] Daniel Horan, "A Franciscan Approach to Ministry," *Review for Religious*, 68 (2009): 132-43.

[13] Horan, "A Franciscan Approach to Ministry," 133-34.

cans were not inhibited by the social stigmas of class and status, but engaged the poor and voiceless, as well as the wealthy and powerful alike.

This also allowed them to move beyond the perceived borders and limitations of the ecclesiastical or ministerial norms of the day. It is no wonder that the Franciscans quickly became some of the most popular preachers and confessors of their day. Their willingness to incorporate contemporary or popular culture into the explication of the Christian faith, combined as it were with their stance of humility (which meant that no one was threatened by their undisclosed agendas or ambitions), led to a popularity and accessibility rarely seen before in Christian ministry.

In many of the same ways Franciscans of our own day continue to be popular preachers, retreat leaders, educators, and pastors. For better or worse, many of our parishes and ministerial centers are viewed as "destination churches," for which many are willing to travel some distances to participate in the life of the faith community. This is, in several ways, a contemporary parochial and pastoral iteration of what was experienced by those first friars early on. It is not at all unusual for Franciscans to be associated with innovative and novel ministries. Whether it takes the form of interreligious dialogue (one thinks of the longstanding Franciscan presence in the Holy Land), direct service to the poor and marginalized (one thinks of some of the first HIV/AIDS ministries in the 1980s), missionary work abroad (lest we forget the Franciscan presence among the Columbian exploration campaigns and elsewhere) and the like. It only seems fitting that, as the friars have for centuries embraced the challenge and joy of serving the Church and world in new frontiers, the Franciscans might be inspired to be on the frontline of the latest territory in need of pastoral care and evangelical engagement: the Internet.

In some ways the Internet, and all the new social media it has spawned, is the great equalizer of our history. Although nothing in this life is entirely egalitarian,

the World Wide Web has revolutionized the manner in which information is accessed, communication is carried out, and business is transacted. Where once most people where subject to more arcane structures of social interaction, limitations on access to news information, restrictions on communication and relegation to the realm of the voiceless in a society where the powerful few were heard, now anyone with access to a computer and an Internet connection can conceivably engage in public and constructive discourse previously unimaginable. I think that it was said best by the advertising industry's standard publication, *AdWeek*, in a recent article about new social media and high fashion. "Digital is democratizing; it's about accessibility. The brand image for high-end fashion is all about inaccessibility: keep the masses out so that the people who can afford to buy their way in feel they're exceptional."[14] The categories of the *maiores* and *minores* of the Internet, if such adjudication is even possible in such a milieu, have radically changed. The general setting of the technological context seems easily compatible with the ministerial disposition of the Franciscan tradition. There is something to be said for the systemic structures of injustice that continue to exist in the analog world, issues that still require addressing, the landscape of pastoral ministry has shifted in such a way that we cannot simply ignore the emergent structures of cultural and interpersonal engagement made available through the ubiquity of technology, particularly as it is manifested in new social media.

Beyond the potential for increased equity brought about by technology in the form of the Internet with all its subsidiary realities, we must also recognize the importance that the identification of a new territory presents to the Christian world. Both Pope Benedict XVI and the United States bishops have spoken about the need to "evangelize the Internet," by bringing the Gospel in explicit and implicit ways to this "new world."

[14] John Ortved, "Is Digital Killing the Luxury Brand?" *AdWeek*, 52 (September 12, 2011): 56.

In his address on the occasion of the 44th World Communications Day, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of what he calls "the important and sensitive pastoral area of digital communications," through which people can "discover new possibilities for carrying out their ministry *to* and *for* the Word of God."[15] Benedict XVI continues, emphasizing the ministerial imperative present in this new and challenging landscape:

> Responding adequately to this challenge amid today's cultural shifts, to which young people are especially sensitive, necessarily involves using new communications technologies. The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul's exclamation: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1Cor 9:16). The increased availability of the new technologies demands greater responsibility on the part of those called to proclaim the Word, but it also requires them to become more focused, efficient and compelling in their efforts. Priests [and other ministers] stand at the threshold of a new era: as new technologies create deeper forms of relationship across greater distances, they are called to respond pastorally by putting the media ever more effectively at the service of the Word.[16]

The Pope is acutely aware of the role that technology plays in our contemporary world. No longer, he suggests, is the Church's engagement in new social media and other forms of digital communication an optional enterprise, but it has become a constitutive element of ministry to God's people in our age. From Benedict XVI's perspective,

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[15] Pope Benedict XVI, "The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word," Vatican English trans. (Sunday, May 16, 2010). [Available at http://www.vatican.va]

[16] Pope Benedict XVI, "The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World."

the Church's call to engage technology also bears a missionary character. The Pope writes:

> God's loving care for all people in Christ must be expressed in the digital world not simply as an artifact from the past, or a learned theory, but as something concrete, present, and engaging. Our pastoral presence in that world must thus serve to show our contemporaries, especially the many people who experience uncertainty and confusion, that God is near; that in Christ we all belong to one another.[17]

Through the use of technology, Christians are called to reach out to the world within this new environment to bring the Word of God into the digital public square. As the Pope says elsewhere, this is not an invitation for Christians to proselytize, but to respect the beliefs of so many throughout the world who are also present online, observing the sincere desire for enduring truth and the absolute among "people of every culture," "those who do not believe" and "the disheartened," as perhaps a first step of evangelization.[18]

Similarly, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), in a number of formats and venues, has also addressed the necessary place technology now has in Christian outreach, ministry, and preaching today. In what I would characterize as one of the best addresses given by a Catholic bishop in recent history, Bishop Ronald Herzog of the Dioceses of Alexandria spoke to the American bishops during their annual fall meeting in 2010. He highlighted both the democratizing quality of new social media and the sense in which the Internet and other technology is a new territory, or what Pope Benedict XVI has termed a new and "digital continent."

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[17] Pope Benedict XVI, "The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World."

[18] Pope Benedict XVI, "The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World."

Herzog began his remarks with a stern and direct admonition for his brother bishops: "I am here today to suggest that you should not allow yourselves to be fooled by its appearance. Social media is proving itself to be a force with which to be reckoned. If not, the church may be facing as great a challenge as that of the Protestant Reformation."[19] He quickly assures his fellow bishops that his comment is in no way hyperbolic, but a serious call for consideration. Herzog reflects on the challenge that the democratizing reality of the Internet poses for ministers in the Church:

> One of the greatest challenges of this culture to the Catholic Church is its egalitarianism. Anyone can create a blog; everyone's opinion is valid. And if a question or contradiction is posted, the digital natives expect a response and something resembling a conversation. We can choose not to enter into that cultural mindset, but we do so at great peril to the Church's credibility and approachability in the minds of the natives, those who are growing up in this new culture. This is a new form of pastoral ministry. It may not be the platform we were seeking, but it is an opportunity of such magnitude that we should consider carefully the consequences of disregarding it.[20]

Herzog wisely draws attention to the shifting power dynamics ushered in by the technology of the digital age. No longer is power limited to the elite, the clergy, the wealthy, and those who have maintained a hegemony of authority. Now a new generation is arising within a context that recognizes a newfound egalitarian platform from which all have a voice and the otherwise marginalized

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[19] Ronald Herzog, "Social Media: Friend or Foe, Google or Hornswoggle?" an unpublished address delivered at the Fall 2010 USCCB annual meeting (November 15, 2010). Available at [http://whistpersintheloggia.blogspot.com]

[20] Herzog, "Social Media: Friend or Foe, Google or Hornswoggle?"

might dwell. The Church, Herzog implies, must reconceive its identity as something apart from other institutions and realities, in order to transcend the boundaries built over centuries of exclusivity and membership, thereby entering into conversation and engagement with folks from all walks of life.

Additionally, Herzog, drawing on the comments of Pope Benedict XVI, notes that a new *location* has been discovered in the emergence of the Internet and social media. Herzog explains that "Pope Benedict XVI calls the world of social media a Digital Continent, with natives, immigrants, and even missionaries. He encourages Catholics, especially our priests, to approach this culture of 140 characters and virtual friendships as a great opportunity for evangelization. We are asked to respect the culture of these Twitterers and Facebookers, and to engage on their terms to bring Christ into their 'Brave new world.'"[21]

As already highlighted, the charismatic impulse for Franciscans to live among the marginalized and otherwise voiceless and to move beyond the ordinary boundaries of social, cultural, and religious demarcation suggest that what Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop Ronald Herzog are prophetically announcing is an intuitively recognizable opportunity for the Franciscan family. What is already always at play in the heart of a tradition that began with a handful of the faithful following Francis's model for evangelical life aligns well with the need of the world and Church today. What might seem like a novel form of engagement, preaching and ministry is, it would seem, a natural expression of what it means to live out the Franciscan way of life, the *vita evangelica*, in our contemporary world. Although such statements are often dismissed as too speculative or flippant, there appears to be some truth in the tradition that suggests if Francis of Assisi were alive today, one might very well find him on Facebook. Yet, because he is not, the responsibility is

[21] Herzog, "Social Media: Friend or Foe, Google or Hornswoggle?"

passed to us – his spiritual sons and daughters in faith – to preach by our deeds and proclaim the Word to the world, both in real time and online.[22]

III. Peaceable Franciscans and The Renouncement of Power

If the evangelical and missionary vocation of the Franciscan tradition compels contemporary Franciscan men and women to engage the culture of the digital era in ways that honor the egalitarian quality and missionary character of this new world, as I believe it does, then it represents something of a "green light" for technological ministry today. While there are clearly positive and necessary dimensions to this new ministerial landscape, there are also cautions that we must consider in light of the same Franciscan tradition. In other words, along with a "green light" one finds a "yellow light," urging careful consideration of the complex reality of the technological age, a reminder that discernment must always be taken seriously in any form of ministry and community. I believe that this "yellow light" appears in the Franciscan model of peaceable living arising from the renouncement of power.

In Francis's time the renouncement of power for which he is best known takes the form of rejecting the economic or monetary system of his day. Surely this remains an important element of the Franciscan disposition toward to world today. Franciscan men and women are, at least in part, supposed to live prophetically as people committed to speaking out against the systemically sinful nature of capitalism and unbridled consumption that continues to wreak havoc in our nation and world. Yet, there are additional ways in which Franciscans can continue to live out the renouncement of power first modeled in the lived example of Francis. As it concerns technology and social media, it stems from the *how* a Franciscan is supposed

[22] This is, of course, an allusion to Francis's instruction to "Let all the brothers, however, preach by their deeds," found in Francis of Assisi, *Regula non bullata*, c. 17, v. 3, in *FA:ED* 1, 74.

to go about living the digital world as opposed to the *why*, which was presented in the last section.

Among the manifold features of technology that might be classified as inherently good or even neutral presences in our world, there remains a shadow side to the widely popular and accessible tools of the Internet and social media. Identity manipulation, harassment, uncharitable discussion, libelous commenting, the option for anonymity and the like all coalesce to create a specter of disunity and fear online. While the Internet and social-media platforms provide the otherwise voiceless with an opportunity to speak and engage the world, these same realities provide the condition for the possibility of contentious disputes, hateful speech and mean-spirited engagement with people of different cultures and those who hold different beliefs. This sort of digital environment mirrors the "real time" power games of cliques or insular and exclusive groups.

Who has the voice and who gets the attention are the primary foci of some Internet interlocutors. Whereas the ability to disagree as disrespectfully with others is often not an option in "real time" due to the limitations of geography and other aspects of the analog world, the digital world can provide a vehicle for those with malevolent agendas and insidious interests. Many, including Pope Benedict XVI, have lamented the lack of civility in certain fora online.[23] Responding to concerns related to the all-too-often vitriolic discourse on so-called "Catholic blogs," the Pope called for men and women to adopt a "'Christian style of presence' online that is responsible, honest, and discreet."[24] This sense of a disrespectful environment present online is exacerbated by the option to hide behind pseudonyms, all the while circumventing the social (and even juridical) means of accountability upon which we have come to rely in the conventions of debate and discussion in the public square offline.

[23] See Nicole Winfield, "Pope Benedict XVI Weighs in on Social Media," The Associated Press (January 24, 2011).

[24] Winfield, "Pope Benedict XVI Weighs in on Social Media."

Francis of Assisi's way of living in the world – following in the footprints of Jesus Christ – is a model that offers an implicit, yet powerful, critique of a digital culture that can at times reflect the worst rather than the best of humanity. Time and again in Francis's writings we read of the Saint's insistence that those who desire to live the Gospel and follow in his way of life are to be peacemakers in the world. Among the frequent references to peaceable relationship as goal in Francis's writing is this rather direct admonition in Chapter Three of the *Later Rule*: "I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world; but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming."[25] So central is this theme that Francis makes a concerted effort to incorporate peacemaking into the way of life of the brothers.

Elsewhere in the *Later Rule* Francis again highlights the way in which the brothers are to go about the world, using by way of example and draws from the experience of the friars encountering each other to illustrate his point. Francis writes, "Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family."[26] It is this fraternal, familial notion of relationship that guides the way the Franciscans are to encounter each other and others in the world. One also finds the theme of peacemaking in Francis's undated series of conferences commonly referred to as the Admonitions. "Admonition XV" presents a succinct reiteration of this Franciscan theme: "Those people are truly peacemakers who, regardless of what they suffer in this world, preserve peace of spirit and body out of love of our Lord Jesus Christ."[27]

Yet, Francis's most powerful and explicit reference to peacemaking as a constitutive element of Gospel living comes in his famous *Canticle of the Creatures*. In that

[25] *Regula bullata*, c. 3, vv. 10-11, in *FA:ED* 1, 102.

[26] *Regula bullata*, c. 6, v. 7, in *FA:ED* 1, 103.

[27] Francis of Assisi, "Admonition XV [Peace]," v. 2, in *FA:ED* 1, 134.

masterful and renowned poem, Francis names different elements of the created order, always prefacing the respective part of creation with the familiar title "brother," "sister," or even "mother." It isn't until he gets close to the end of the text that he mentions human beings at all. Up until that point, Francis had named the ways in which the elements of creation praise God in and through what it is they are created to be; brother sun through light and wind through weather, for example. What is it that human beings are created to do? How is it that they are to praise God? Francis explains, "Praised be You, my Lord, through those who *give pardon for Your love*, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who *endure in peace* for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned."[28] Human beings live out their vocation as part of God's inherently good creation through exercising forgiveness and peace.

The French scholar Jacques Dalarun, in his magisterial study on the life and writings of Francis of Assisi and his refusal of power, summarizes what he sees as the initial trajectory and guiding principles of Francis's early movement, that which we have inherited today:

> In its beginnings, the Order that is called "Franciscan," or more accurately, "The order of Friars Minor," was a fraternity of mostly lay individuals who decided to do penance. The founder, in his concern to live "according to the form of the Holy Gospel," chose to establish in a rule of religious life the condition shared by the most powerless classes in the society of his time: destitution, precariousness, itinerancy, manual labor. He showed a loathing for all forms of power and went far beyond the scorn of the world found in the monastic and ascetic tradition. With Francis, there is less of a merely visible break with the world; at the heart of

[28] Francis of Assisi, "Canticle of the Creatures," vv. 10-22, in *FA:ED* 1, 114.

> his life there is instead more intransigence toward any compromise with the world and its powers.[29]

There is in Dalarun's observation a key truth that must never be overlooked when examining the mission and spirituality of the Franciscan movement in the world in any given age. Francis never sought to retreat from or enter into a cloister apart from the world. Instead, the Franciscans were always to be deeply involved in the life and activity of the world, meeting all sorts of people where they were and living among and for them. This refusal to flee the quotidian world was a radical departure from most of the religious-community traditions of the day. So too was Francis's particular way of living in that world. The refusal to "play by the rules" of the world permitted Francis and those who would come after him to enter into relationship with people of all backgrounds, including the voiceless and marginalized of his day. His example offered a sense of hope and direction that sought to reflect the goodness of God revealed in Christ and presented in the Gospel.

For us in today's technological milieu, there is yet another iteration of Francis's wisdom, admonition and example to embrace. As "lesser" brothers and sisters, we too are challenged to live up to our vocation as part of God's good creation. We are to be peacemakers in the world, which now includes the frequently contentious milieu of the Internet and across social-media platforms. We are not only called to dwell among the people of God online and bring our faith onto the "Digital Continent," but we are to do so in peace, while refusing to embrace the lure of power found in the competitive and ubiquitous land of technology. It is in this way that our engagement with technology can truly translate the wisdom of the Franciscan tradition, particularly in terms of mission and spirituality, into a modern language for a world desperately in need of hearing and receiving the Good News. We are

[29] Jacques Dalarun, *Francis of Assisi and Power*, trans. Anne Bartol (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2007), 17.

commissioned, by virtue of our Baptism and our Franciscan heritage, to be ambassadors of peace and reconcilers of community in our own age and in our own ways. We are to refuse the temptation to quarrel and attack, to hide behind screen names created for anonymity and to diminish, in any way, the dignity of any human being.

It is a caution, but it is also a mandate: Franciscans are to go into the digital world bringing the Good News of Christ and the peace of reconcilers.

IV. The Blessing of Embodiment

One of the most persistent challenges to authentic Christianity over the course of two millennia has been the appearance and reappearance of a way of thinking most popularly referred to as Manicheism, an unorthodox view of the human person and creation that advances a very dualistic worldview. Named for the third-century figure who advanced a spirituality rooted in Neoplatonic-like influences that subordinated the created world, especially the reality of human physicality, to the world of ideas and the spiritual. A common, albeit imperfect, way to summarize a general Manichean disposition would be to say that the human soul is all that really matters, while the human body is merely an imperfect and temporal product of a bad demigod. This type of thinking, namely that which elevates the mind or soul over the body or creation, has proven to be immensely popular throughout history. At various points over the centuries some form of this way of thinking generally appears to emerge. I believe that one of the most significant dangers of an uncritical appropriation of the products of our digital age, including the use of the Internet and social-media platforms, is that we risk subordinating our physical embodiment to an overemphasis of the mental or spiritual dimensions of our reality.

At this point we have looked at two areas of the Franciscan tradition relevant to our contemporary situation:

(a) the evangelical and missionary vocation, as well as (b) the Franciscan call to be peacemakers that renounce the power structures of the world. They have been described as "green" and "yellow lights," respectively, for the first strikes me as a genuine and powerful call to engage technology, while the second offers us a way to approach this new landscape with caution. This last area focuses on a challenge that the Franciscan tradition presents to us as we move forward to pursue the first point (the "green light") with the sensitivity encouraged by the second point (the "yellow light"). We will spend just a short amount of time examining this challenge, if only because for some it might prove an understandably tenuous concern. Nevertheless, when looking over the Franciscan tradition for resources, direction, and guidance in our present age, this is something that captures the attention of those aware of the need for discernment in living the *vita evangelica* today.

Unlike several of the contemporaneous religious movements of the day, Francis's community of Lesser Brothers did not espouse this Manichean tendency to look down on the created world and the human body. Instead, as exhibited in Francis's most famous text, *The Canticle of the Creatures*, Francis intuitively recognizes the sacredness of all creation. The material world is not something to be disparaged or rejected, but embraced as part of the family of God's created cosmos. Francis's *modus operandi* was to view creation as intrinsically good and from which no escape is needed.

In the first program of life for the Franciscans, popularly called *The Earlier Rule*, Francis inserted a rather lengthy prayer that comes to us as chapter twenty-three. In this prayer, Francis opens his "prayer and thanksgiving" with a threefold hymn of thanks: first, for God in God's self; second, for all of creation; and third, for the Incarnation, through which Christ has redeemed and glorified us. The section on creation is important for, although it is brief, it reacts in a direct way against the Manichean strains of thinking in his time. "You have created every-

thing spiritual *and corporeal* and, after making us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise."[30] While many religious movements were preaching against the possibility that God would have created the corporeal world, Francis boldly reasserts this basic tenet of the faith.

Furthermore, Francis placed a tremendous emphasis on the significance of the Incarnation for creation in general and humanity in particular. This is a paradigmatic theme that those who will follow in Francis's footprints in centuries to come will develop further, great thinkers the like of St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus. Perhaps one of the most revealing passages from the early Franciscan sources about Francis's understanding of the centrality of the Incarnation is found in a collection of stories and remembrances of the early friars who knew Francis:

> For blessed Francis held the Nativity of the Lord in greater reverence than any other of the Lord's solemnities. For although the Lord may have accomplished our salvation in his other solemnities, nevertheless, once He was born to us, as blessed Francis would say, it was certain that we would be saved. On that day he wanted every Christian to rejoice in the Lord and, for love of Him who gave Himself to us, wished everyone to be cheerfully generous not only to the poor but also to the animals and birds.[31]

Francis knew that the Incarnation was the highest example of the reality that God created the entire cosmos – things *seen* and unseen – very good. In fact, so good was creation that God desired from all eternity to enter into Creation in a very particular and direct way. Franciscan theologians like John Duns Scotus express precisely this latent thought in Francis's own spiritual writing and

[30] *Regula non bullata*, c. 23, v. 1, in *FA:ED* 1, 82.
[31] *The Assisi Compilation*, no. 14, in *FA:ED* 2, 130.

worldview in a more substantially theological presentation.

While oftentimes the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord more readily captures the attention and imagination of Christians – such as what we witnessed in the blockbuster phenomenon of Mel Gibson's grotesque film, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) – Francis challenges us to recall that the very condition for the possibility of the Resurrection, and therefore Salvation, occurs in the act of God becoming one like us through the Incarnation, through the Word becoming Flesh. There is a popular temptation to forget the *real* humanity of Jesus Christ and think of Him as simply "God in human clothing" (something that was indeed a heresy condemned in the earliest centuries of the church), but instead the Truth is that God took on our very weakness and suffered our lowliness as the Christological hymn in St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians proclaims: "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8, NRSV). We must strive as best we can to remember the inherent goodness of our embodiment, its gifted state in the plan of God's creation.

This brings us to the topic at hand. While it seems like a concern reserved for the Stephen Spielberg movies about artificial intelligence or science fiction, the truth is that an overly dependent relationship on technology can promote a sense of disembodiment. Although such a stark experience of "losing one's self" in the digital world is hardly an everyday reality for most people, the condition of forgetfulness about what it means to be a fully integrated person is exacerbated by the omnipresence and multi-platform ubiquity of digital technology.

We see examples of this all the time and lament its unfortunate presence. From an initial glance around any given public space, office building, restaurant, or even home, fewer people connect to each other in a "real-time" or physical way. Instead, it's a matter of routinely (to

the point of obsessively) checking the BlackBerry smartphones, iPhones and Droids; it's going to the Internet, sending an email, or collectively watching the TV instead of engaging in dialogue and human communication; it's staying more and more in our heads instead of integrating our minds with our hearts and souls. Franciscan theologian Ilia Delio offers this reflection along similar lines: "The prevalence of anonymity marks our culture today; hence the desire for some people to be identified either by dress, tattoos, or sculptured hair. We are wired together on the Internet, on our Droids, iPhones, and video screens, but face to face we are like marble statues."[32] I often wonder if this is not exactly what contributes to the so-called "obesity epidemic" with North American youth today. So fixated have we become on our thoughts, trapped at times in our heads, that we neglect the corporeal dimension of our existence. That we are embodied is not accidental to who we are – to think so is to reinvent the Manichean problem of ages past and present. That we are embodied is how we were created by God.

There is perhaps more that can be said about this challenge to us in the digital age, but I think that simply naming the issue provides us with the opportunity to reflect individually and collectively on the ways in which we excel or fail to live as fully functioning and integrated human persons. What Francis and his followers provide us with is a challenge to the entirely passive embrace of technology. These things are not inherently bad, quite the contrary. Pope Benedict XVI, among others, has commented on the truly awesome reflection of human creativity in the emergence and development of technology. It is but one of the many iterations of our co-creative vocation as those created in God's image and likeness. But we must not let the tail wag the dog, allow us to become enslaved by our digital creations, trapped inside the our own minds, and therefore isolated from one another. Francis makes it very clear that what it means to be hu-

[32] Ilia Delio, *Compassion: Living in the Spirit of St. Francis* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011), xiii.

man and to follow in the footprints of Christ is to be in authentically human relationship, such that we mirror what God has done for us in becoming embodied and entering into our world as one like us.

V. Conclusion

So where does this leave us? Haven't I simply tossed out some equivocating views that leave us without a singular approach or perspective on what it means to be Franciscan in a digital age or understand the contributions the Franciscan tradition offers spiritual seekers today? Yes and no. Yes, there is no easy, one-shot response or answer to the difficult and novel questions that arise as a result of the shifting dynamics of this technologically hegemonic era. And, no, I think there is much to consider here by way of understanding a markedly Franciscan disposition when it comes to new technology and its multiple uses. Like Aristotle's understanding of virtue as being found between two vices, so too the spiritual tradition that we inherit some eight-hundred years after Francis first began the experiment is located between two opposing and extreme views. There are those on one side that claim technology and new social media are to be avoided at all costs, that they are problematic and useless to contemporary people of faith. There are also those on the other side that claim technology should be embraced wholesale, without all that much discernment or supplemental consideration. Both sides are incorrect.

The technology to which we have access today and use in all aspects of our lives provides a wonderful opportunity for women and men of faith to engage in many different enterprises. Yet, this same technology poses a potential threat to our spiritual lives and relationships, often serving as the location of online disputes, thoughtless electronic communication and an increasingly disembodied outlook on life. The response that Francis offers us is one rooted in the both/and approach representative

of so much of the Catholic Christian tradition. Technology and new social media are *both* good *and* bad. They are inherently open to whatever ends we direct their use.

To offer a little lighthearted illustration of what this might look like, I share here an example I used in an article I wrote in 2010 titled, "*Koinonia* and the Church in the Digital Age:"

> If Jesus had been born in 1980 and began his public ministry in 2010, would he have "friended" the twelve apostles on Facebook instead of visiting the Sea of Galilee? ... Had Jesus "friended" the Apostles on Facebook, he would have very likely sent an "e-vite" to each one for an in-person gathering shortly thereafter.[33]

It's rather difficult to imagine the Last Supper taking place over Skype or Jesus' healing the sick through text message, and rightly so, for there are things that will never have a digital equivalent. But, I cannot help but wonder whether we might find Francis on Facebook had he been born in our lifetime and not nearly a millennium ago. If he did not personally join Facebook or use Twitter or build a profile on LinkedIn, then I imagine that those friars who might find themselves compelled to reach out to others and preach the Gospel online might ask for his blessing. In return, Francis might give his approval as he did to St. Anthony of Padua when the friar asked if he could teach the other friars theology – something that seemed contrary to Francis's original "game plan" of Gospel living. Francis's response might read something like this: "I am pleased that you want to be present on Facebook and through other social media providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you 'do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion' during this activity." And with that, a new age of mission and ministry would have begun.

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[33] Daniel Horan, "Koinonia and the Church in the Digital Age," *Review for Religious*, 69 (2010): 230-37.

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Saint Clare and the Poverty of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Robert Stewart, O.F.M.

The Incarnation is a mystery of poverty, in which the Son of God reveals to humanity the nature of God who is poor. His whole existence was a sacrament of the living God, the fullness of revelation of God who is poor because of his total offering of Himself both within the intimate life of the Trinity and in the sharing of His life with us through His Son Jesus Christ.

From the first moment of conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary there was born a person who was totally for others and above all for the "Other," a person who was so radically dispossessed of self that he existed by subsisting in the Eternal Word. In the words of Saint John "So the Word became flesh: he made his home among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14-15). The humanity of Jesus, from the first moment of his existence is absolutely, radically, totally poor, dispossessed of all egoism so as to be immediately invested with the subsistence of the Word. This dispossession of the humanity of Jesus is so radical that the union of the human and the divine natures is hypostatic, personal; we have two natures existing in the person of the Word who was made flesh. This Word of God for love of us emptied himself, making himself nothing, assuming the human likeness.

> Take to heart among yourselves what you find in Christ Jesus: he was in the form of God; yet he laid

> no claim to equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the form of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, sharing the human lot, he humbled himself and was obedient, even to the point of death, *death on a cross* (Phil. 2:5-8).

Saint Clare contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation wrote:

> Since you have cast aside all [those] things which, in this deceitful and turbulent world have ensnared their blind lovers, love Him totally Who gave Himself totally for Your love. His beauty the sun and moon admire; and of His gifts there is no limit in abundance, preciousness, and magnitude. I am speaking of Him Who is the Son of the Most High, whom the Virgin brought to birth and remained a virgin after His birth. Cling to His most sweet Mother who carried a Son whom the heavens could not contain; and yet she carried Him in the little enclosure of her holy womb and held Him in her virginal lap (3LAg 15-19).

So in the womb of the Blessed Mother Mary there was born the Son who was both totally open to Father from all eternity and totally open to us to all eternity. The Word was eternally poor, as Poverty constitutes the mystery of the Trinity, in which the Father gives Himself totally to the Son and the Son returns all to the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the self-giving love of the Father and the Son. Further, the Son as the perfect Sacrament of the Divine expressed his love in poverty in dispossessing Himself and giving Himself totally to us, asking only that we have ourselves in giving ourselves totally in love to Him.

When Clare asked us to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation she asked us see in Jesus, born in a stable, working on the building site, wandering as a healer and preacher without a roof over his head, dying a reject-

ed prophet the God who the heavens could not contain. She asks us to see in this man just like us, who wandered the earth, who was hungry, tired, frustrated, and dispirited, God the creator and sustainer of the universe.

> Look at the parameters of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvellous humility, O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger! Then, at the surface of the mirror, dwell on the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labours and burdens which He endured for the redemption of mankind. Then in the depths of the same mirror contemplate the ineffable charity which led him to suffer on the wood of the Cross and die thereon the most shameful kind of death (4LAg 19-23).

> Cling to His most sweet Mother who carried a Son Whom the heavens could not contain (3LAg 18).

How difficult to imagine the God who was born in a stable, lived in Nazareth, cried, was tired, frustrated, angry, was like us in all things but sin. A God who ate and drank with others, who opposed the heavy burdens placed on people by the lawyers, who opposed the religious authorities' interpretation of the law and replaced it by a law of love, who died in bitter agony, a rejected prophet, deserted by most of his disciples, who throughout His life exercised no power but that of abiding love. It is almost impossible to imagine such a one as God the creator.

It must have been particularly difficult for Mary and the apostles who were Jews committed to the declaration of the Torah that our God is One God, whose history was steeped in the wonderful works of God to accept that God incarnate was manifested in the Poor Jesus. But they persevered in prayer, pondering on the mystery of God

revealed in Jesus Christ. Enlightened by the Spirit the fruits of the pondering of early Christians in the Church bore fruit in the Gospels and was clarified in the early Council of Nicaea who affirmed this Jesus was consubstantial to the Father and the Son and Chalcedon who made clear the two natures in the one poor Christ.

When Clare contemplated the Incarnation she did so within the Church and her pondering of the scriptures was done in the light of tradition and the teaching of the Church. For her the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ reveals for us that God is totally for us. The divine love is the love of the Father who sends in love the Son who dies for us in love, and the Spirit who produces the fruit of love in those whose hearts he inhabits. Clare focuses on Christ but not on Christ alone but also on the Spirit with whom she lives in Nuptial Union. It is the Spirit who enables her to cry "Abba," Father and draws her to her Heavenly Spouse. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us. God is within us.

The Incarnation reminds us that the Father has given Himself to the Son from all eternity and now through the Spirit that he pours into our hearts offers Himself to us for all eternity. Christ was ever open to receive from the Father so that he and the Father were one in mind and heart. The obstacle to us receiving the love and life of God is that our egoism obstructs the openness to the total offer made of divine life. We are unable to totally dispossess ourselves, to let go and let God be.

Clare appeals to us:

> Therefore, as the glorious Virgin carried [Christ] materially in her body, you too, by following in His footprints (cf. 1Peter 2:21), especially [those] of poverty and humility, can without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body. And you will hold Him by Whom you and all things are held together (cf. Wis 1:7; Col 1:17), [thus] possessing that which, in comparison with

> all the other transitory possessions of this world, you will possess more securely (3LAg 24-26).

Clare recognises that if we live always in the sacrificial love required by those who are joined in nuptial bliss with Christ. If we live as brides of Christ and brides of the Spirit, choosing to live in poverty and total dispossession then we will be open to receive from God the life he wishes to share with us. To Agnes of Prague, the sister of the King of Bohemia, she writes, when she heard the news that she had rejected the proposal of marriage of the Emperor Frederick II and chosen a life of poverty by entering the Order of the Poor Ladies of the Rule of Saint Francis:

> For though You, more than others, could have enjoyed the magnificence and honor and dignity of the world, and could have been married to the illustrious Caesar with splendor befitting You and His Excellency. You have rejected all these things and have chosen with Your whole heart and soul a life of holy poverty and destitution. Thus You took a spouse of a more noble lineage, Who will keep Your virginity ever unspotted and unsullied, the Lord Jesus Christ Jesus Christ (3LAg 5-7).

Clare recognises that the Incarnation introduces us to the nuptial union which Saint Paul speaks of in his letter to the Church in Corinth:

> I am jealous for you, with the jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to Christ, thinking of presenting you as a chaste virgin to her true and only husband.

Paul is afraid that the Church may lose its single-hearted devotion to Christ as the one spouse in whom all their richness lies for He has enriched them out of his poverty. Clare in ecstasy cries out when contemplating the mystery of poverty within the spousal relationship:

O blessed poverty,
Who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her!
O holy poverty
To those who possess and desire you
God promises the kingdom of heaven
And offers, indeed eternal glory and blessed life!
O God-centered poverty,
Whom the Lord Jesus Christ
Who ruled and now rules heaven and earth
Who spoke and things were made
Condescended to embrace before all else.

If Francis was wed to the Lady Poverty, Clare was wed to The Poor Christ. Both saw in poverty the only way to relate to God by being empty before Him that they could be filled by the Divine generosity. All is receptivity, the fruit of love in the spousal relationship. The only thing that can deprive us of the fruit of love is being unfaithful to God who became incarnate in the poor Christ.

> You know, I am sure, that the kingdom of heaven is promised and given by the Lord only to the poor (cf. Matt 5:3) for he who loves temporal things loses the fruit of love.

In the Incarnation Jesus solicits our generosity in becoming totally detached from all things and finding ourselves in him who is our all. "God is enough, God is enough and everything else is not enough." In this moment of total generosity we enter into the very being of our spouse Jesus who died naked on the cross for love of all and we are invited to follow naked the naked Christ. If we accept the invitation to die with Christ we associate ourselves to root our lives in Divine Poverty allowing God to communicate to us that, entire He is; inviting us to "Dwell in me, as I am in you" (John 15:4). In this moment of dying to self, in this moment of utter poverty, we enter into the mystery of the Divine Being who is poor because

He is total self-giving love. In that love we are empowered to accept the new commandment, "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Clare praises Agnes:

> As someone zealous for the holiest poverty, in the spirit of great humility and most ardent charity, you have held fast to the footprints (1Peter 2:21) of Him to whom you have merited to be joined as a Spouse (2LAg 7).

For Clare the Incarnation was contemplated in the light of the spousal union, which had resulted in her being united in one body with Christ. She follows the tradition of the Fathers of the Church that "God became man so that man may become God." Together she and her beloved are living in the mysterious passion burning in the heart of God for us all. This passion was revealed on the Cross of Calvary to which Clare invites us to respond.

> Therefore, the Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross, urges those who passed by to consider saying; 'All you who pass this way look and see if there are any sufferings like My sufferings!' (Lam 1:12). Let us answer Him with one voice and spirit, as He said: Remembering this over and over leaves my soul downcast within me (Lam 3:20). From this moment, then, O queen of our heavenly King let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervour of charity!
>
> [As you] further contemplate His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors and sigh for them in the great desire and love of your heart, may you cry out:
>
> Draw me after You!

> We will run in the fragrance of Your perfumes, O heavenly Spouse! (4LAg 24-30).

She reminds us that:

> If we suffer with Him, you shall reign with Him
> [If you] weep [with Him], you shall rejoice with Him;
> [If you] die [with Him], on the cross of tribulation
> You shall possess heavenly mansion in the splendor of the saints (2LAg 21).

Through our participation in the Incarnation of the Son of man we come to the fullness of "a blessed and eternal life" (1LAg 30).

Questions for Reflection

What feelings does the expression 'The Poor Crucified Christ' awaken in you? Are your feelings similar to those of Clare when she wrote her fourth letter to Agnes?

What connection does Clare develop between the Incarnation of the Body of Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Body of Christ which is the Church?

Things remain the same only our way of looking at them changes when we encounter the "Poor Christ". How has your vision changed through your encounter with the "Poor Christ?

How has your idea of the Divine Majesty been altered allowing you to see beauty and majesty in the "Poor Crucified Christ?"

Clare sees the "poor Christ" as the sacrament of God, and so she enters into a sacrament union with Christ, taking Him as her spouse. How does being a "Spouse of Christ" and it's the mystical nuptial reciprocity find expression in your daily life?

The Cord, 62.3 (2012)

The Poor Clares and the Reformation

Frank P. Lane

The Poor Man of Assisi and his friend Clare left their followers a legacy of wisdom and insight that prevailed over the passing of centuries, into other countries and through revolutionary changes in culture. The strictly cloistered Colletine Poor Clares of Nürnberg and Geneva were some four centuries and some five to six hundred miles removed from the events in Assisi in the early part of the thirteenth century, yet, when great trials came to their monasteries, the wisdom of Francis and Clare was seen to be deeply embedded in their minds and in their hearts.

In the mid-1520s the fury of the turbulence of religious dissent flowing out of Wittenberg and Bern crashed into the cloistered world of women who claimed Clare and Francis as their teachers and guides in their earthly pilgrimage. From the routines of prayer, fasting, work, and liturgy these women were thrown into a confrontation with physical and emotional violence, hatred, and fear. Their responses were, fortunately, recorded by one of their Abbesses and by one who was to become an Abbess in exile in France. These narratives, filled with difficult decisions and a type of courage that vexed and angered the civil leadership of their cities, were meticulously recounted on a day-by-day basis so we can follow not only the events themselves, but also the emotions and ideas that sustained the sisters in the midst of revolution.

Caritas Pirckheimer, Poor Clare Abbess of Nürnberg and Jeanne de Jussie, a member of the Abbess's Council in Geneva carefully followed the daily events that led to the resolutions of great issues beyond the sisters' control. In Caritas's *A Journal of the Reformation Years*[1] and Jeanne's *The Short Chronicle,*[2] a high drama was recorded. Now, we, almost six hundred years later, have a glimpse of the turmoil and real suffering of the Poor Clare nuns in their confrontation with the forces of revolution. The sisters' journals also offer the world of scholarship an exceptional glimpse into one of the small pieces of social and religious life in a turbulent age. They can offer as a gift to their own Sisters in the modern world examples of wisdom and heroism that can help inspire and remind them who they are and where they have come from.

There seemed to be four important principles of the Clares' thought that continually surfaced in their decision-making processes. These would be an understanding of the vows, an understanding of obedience, an understanding of their relationship to each other and their spiritual legacy of prayer, especially in the chanting of the common Office. Each of these is deeply rooted in their Franciscan tradition and each seems to be so deeply embedded in their minds and hearts as to have become almost simply intuitive. Caritas is more intellectual than Jeanne and probably more sophisticated despite Jeanne's obvious literary skills. Nevertheless they arrived at a very similar understanding of the problems they faced even though, of necessity, they found different solutions for their communities.

The issue of the understanding of the vows is significant. The perplexed City Council of Nürnberg shared the concern of their appointed Visitor to the Monastery of St.

[1] Caritas Pirckheimer, *A Journal of the Reformation Years, 1524-1528*, trans. Paul A. MacKenzie (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), from the critical text of Josef Pfanner, *Caritas Pirckheimer, Quellensammlung*, 3. Hefte, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (Landhut: Solanus Druck, 1961).

[2] Jeanne de Jussie, *The Short Chronicle: A Poor Clare's Account of the Reformation in Geneva*, ed. and trans. Carrie Klaus (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Clare, Friederich Pistorius. The former abbot of St. Giles expressed surprise that the Sisters were not more accommodating to the decisions of the City Council. Caritas records, "He admonished us most strongly, that we should always follow the honorable City Council as our superior authority ordained by God.... On the other hand we were not willing, however, to follow those people in matters which ran against our consciences and our oaths (vows)."[3] This interpretation of the role the vows played in their lives goes back to Francis who admonished his followers in the *Regula non Bullata* to obey their superiors unless they were ordered to do something contrary to their conscience or the life they vowed to live. It is also the crux of the debate articulated so clearly in Olivi's advocacy of Poverty when he affirmed, using the *Regula non Bullata,* the proposition that even if the Pope ordered Franciscans to own property, they must disobey because it is contrary to what they vowed to God.[4]

This is precisely the understanding of the vows that both the Clares of Nürnberg and Geneva had when confronted with the local civil authorities to whom most other religious communities had deferred out of civil obedience to a legitimate superior. Pistorius had no idea that the Franciscan way was "different" from that of the other religious houses and so was at a loss to comprehend the resistance to the City Council of the Nürnberg Clares and especially their abbess. When the City Council even invited Phillip Melanchthon to discuss the vows with Caritas while demanding that she release all the sisters from their vows, she replied:

> I responded to the first article that there is no sister in this convent that had made a vow to me or to any other living human person on earth. They had made their vows to almighty God. I cannot, unwor-

[3] Caritas Pirckheimer, 69-70.

[4] David Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan Poverty: The Origin of the Usus Pauper Controversy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 166-70. Olivi's writing on this subject is located in ALKG,III,529.

> thy and useless as I am, release anyone from what has been bound between her and God.[5]

Jeanne de Jussie had quoted Pernette de Montluel or Châteaufort, the Vicaress in Geneva, and the Mother Abbess as using a similar argument with the syndics of Geneva:

> Messieurs, you will have to forgive us because we cannot obey. For our whole lives, we have been obedient to your lordship and your commands when it was permissible. But we cannot submit to this command because we have taken a vow of perpetual seclusion, and we wish to observe it.[6]

The Franciscan ideas of both living the life as the substance of the vow and freely choosing to do so are consistent and clear in this encounter. The Clares of the two cities understood their life in terms of freedom and fidelity to the vows, which Caritas makes clear are made to God and not to any human person.

Obedience is clearly an issue in these encounters as well. Without a clear distinction between civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, obedience was presumed to the authority of Emperor, king, prince, and imperial city councils. Pistorius makes that point clearly when he admonishes the Nürnberg Clares that the council's authority is ordained by God. Mother Vicaress and Mother Abbess in Geneva are consistent with the Nürnberg Clares in their discussion with the Syndics when they acknowledge their history of obedience to the city council except in those things which would make them violate their vows and way of life and also the freedom to live the life they have vowed to live. The admonitions of Francis and the arguments of Olivi are certainly present in the refusal to obey any authority that contradicts what they have promised to God. Franciscan obedience to human authority is

[5] Caritas Pirckheimer, 79.

[6] Jeanne de Jussie, 122-23

always a conditional obedience that ultimately must be subordinate to the vows made to God. This withholding of obedience does not extend, in any way, to other types of disagreements with civil or ecclesiastical authority. It should also be noted that these vows were taken with permission of the Church and affirmed by the Church. These are not some form of private or clandestine promises an individual might decide to make to God but a public act of the Church with approbation. The ability to withhold obedience has to do only with matters concerning living the life one has formally vowed to God they would live and is circumscribed by the content and intention of those specific vows. The life of Francis is an ample witness to this understanding.

The communal nature of the life of the Clares emerges rather clearly in the discussions and consultation within the monastery in both Geneva and Nürnberg during the time of crisis and fear. In their ongoing debate with the City Council, the Nürnberg Clares were not arbitrarily led by their Abbess. "On the next Wednesday I held a chapter meeting. I asked the sisters for advice on how we should proceed."[7] The Vicaress of Geneva appealed to the sisters for advice but also to collectively respond to the Syndics. "The syndic said, 'Lady Vicaress, be quiet and let others who are not of your opinion speak.' Mother Vicaress said, 'I will be glad to'… the sisters responded, 'We say the same thing she does …'"[8] The writings give ample witness to this kind of consultation and mutuality of decision-making within the cloister. There is ample evidence of the deep respect and care they have for one another throughout the narrative of crisis.

The relationship to the Office is of particular interest. During the flight from Geneva, Jeanne said that the sisters were in such straits that they could only take with them: "their Breviaries under their arms and their lightest clothes. When Mother Vicaress asked for the wagons they had promised her that evening, there were none to

[7] Caritas Pirckheimer, 39.

[8] Jeanne de Jussie, 124.

be found, for they had no intention of letting them take anything with them."[9] We can read of the relationship to the Divine Office but what seems most interesting is that the reformers never understood the relationship between the monastic life and the Divine Office. When we see that "they had no intention of letting them take anything with them,"[10] they did not consider their Breviaries as "anything." Yet, when the sisters arrived at the Castle of La Perrière, "They decided to recite the Divine Office in the chapel, which was very fine and dedicated, all the canonical hours."[11] This practice continued at each step of their journey and was their first order of business when they reached Annecy. The Duke of Savoy had them escorted to the Monastery of the Holy Cross (in Annecy) "which he was going to give them for refuge and to restore them to their proper path so that they could observe the Divine Office."[12]

The relationship to the choral office was also very strong in the Monastery in Nürnberg. In 1525, the City Council removed the Franciscan priests from service to the monastery and forbad the celebration of the Mass or the hearing of confessions by any clergy except those they chose to send. These were, of course, priests who had left their orders and their church to follow the new way launched by Luther. The sisters resisted and refused to accept each man the Council sent. Caritas's debate with Pistorius is of particular interest in this regard. When Pistorius attempted to foist a "renegade Carthusian on the sisters as 'pastor,'" Caritas responded, "Are we to confess to a faithless apostate? If he does not keep faith with God, how is he to keep faith with us?"[13] The result was, they had only dissident preaching and no sacraments from 1525 until the last Clare died in 1563.

[9] Jeanne de Jussie, 168.
[10] Jeanne de Jussie, 168.
[11] Jeanne de Jussie, 176.
[12] Jeanne de Jussie, 177.
[13] Caritas Pirckheimer, 71.

The Clares had listened attentively to their Franciscan teacher and preacher of many years, Stephen Fridolin. He had urged them to remember "the choir obligation of the community was the particular way a vowed Poor Clare was to participate in an intimacy with Christ that Francis himself had so dramatically experienced in his life."[14]

In these chronicles of hardship and suffering, the Poor Clares relied on the deep roots of their Franciscan tradition to navigate the waters of time turned hostile and menacing. Their human struggles never seemed to weaken their commitment to vows or to the fidelity to the life they chose to follow. Franciscan obedience moved them to reject the power of civil tyranny, love for each other as sisters in community kept them ever watchful of each other's well being and the choral office anchored them in a life of faith and hope in the ultimate mercy of a loving God.

We do not have access to all of these confrontations throughout the Reformation lands but there were surely many. What we do have, however, paints a dramatic picture of strength, courage, cleverness, and wisdom among the sixteenth-century daughters of St. Clare.

[14] Frank P. Lane, "'Not for Time but for Eternity:' Family, Friendship and Fidelity in the Poor Clare Monastery of Reformation Nürnberg," *Franciscan Studies*, 64 (2006): 275-76.

The *Absorbeat* Prayer: A Spurious but Helpful Writing of St. Francis

Raphael D. Bonanno, O.F.M.

Many a Catholic prayerbook or breviary contains prayers borrowed from other authors that are touching and edifying. The Catholic borrows the thoughts or prayers of recognized authors of spirituality and makes them his own because they express better than he/she can what he feels in his heart. St. Francis did the same thing in the thirteenth century. Some prayers he wrote on his own but others he borrowed. For example, in the Office of the Passion, Francis borrowed fifteen psalms from Scripture but the purposeful arrangement is distinctly original and his own. The *Absorbeat* prayer is another case in point. Some critics attribute it to John of Fecamp. John of Fecamp was a famous abbot and mystic of northern France who died a century before Francos – in the year 1078 AD – but whose "Meditations of St. Augustine" were in vogue during the time of Francis.[1]

Still the question hangs in the air. Why choose a spurious document over a real one of Francis? There are several reasons: 1) because of its age; it antedates 1305 when Ubertino da Casale claimed that Francis used to say this prayer; 2) because of its content; it is a beautiful, strong expression of seraphic love to offer to die out of love for the Beloved; 3) because of curiosity about how a document that lasted for so many centuries could

[1] Jean Leclerq, "Jean de Fecamp," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, Tome VIII (Paris:Beauchesne, 1974), cols. 509-11.

suddenly be named "spurious" in 1976 by Esser; and 4) because people who pray a lot often use other people's prayers, as mentioned above.

In this essay I would like, first of all, to give the text; secondly, the problem of its lack of authenticity; thirdly, the history of the text in the various editions over the centuries, and fourthly, some parallels in other writings of Francis and Clare. In conclusion, finally, we will reflect on the results.

The Text Itself

The latest text is found in *FA:ED* 3, 190-91, and reads:

> I beg you, Lord, let the glowing and honey-sweet force of your love draw my mind away from all things that are under heaven, that I may die for love of the love of you, who thought it a worthy thing to die for love of the love of me.

In a footnote, the volume editors claim that the authenticity of this prayer is no longer accepted and that it is proven to be of patristic inspiration. They then cite Esser's critical edition of 1978. The various editions of the writings add more words or entitle the prayer differently but basically this is the text.

Authentic or Spurious

The problem of authenticity of Francis's writings is explained well by Theophile Desbonnets in his fine introduction to the French edition of the Writings of Francis of Assisi.[2] He gives three fundamental criteria based on 1) the four basic collections; 2) Francis as author in some way; and 3) the thought or content of the writings.

[2] Francois d'Assise, *Ecrits* (1981).

1) Can the writing under examination be found in one or more of the four collections considered as "canonical": the #338 collection from the Communal Library of Assisi, the Avignon collection, the Portiuncula collection and finally the collection of the North or the Low Countries? The *Absorbeat* prayer does not appear in any of these important collections.

2) Can Francis be considered the author? The answer to this question leads us to consider various degrees in which one can be called an author. For example, a) the author physically wrote down the text, that is, in an autograph, of which we have only two, both to Brother Leo, from the hand of Francis, one in the Sacro Convento and the other in the Cathedral of Spoleto. b) The author dictated his text exactly to a secretary. Not the case here. c) The author can give his ideas and let the secretary put them into a final form. Although Francis did this sometimes, this rule does not apply to the *Absorbeat*. d) The hearer could have noted down (more or less faithfully) the ideas really held by the author, but which in the thought of the author, were not meant to be transmitted in writing. An example of this is the *Reportatio* of Scotus, whose students copied down his ideas because he never wrote a Summa like Aquinas or Bonaventure. This rule, too, does not apply to the prayer in question. e) A careful listener puts into the mouth (or under the pen-name) of the author a text discovered, but which exemplifies or is a summary of a thought that the author knows well. This scenario is probably the one that comes the closest to the situation of the *Absorbeat* prayer. Because it sounds like Francis, it must be Francis. Not necessarily. f) Another case appears here in the question of authorship. It is a text, which carries the name of Francis, but is in reality the fruit of a long maturation process, a work of the entire brotherhood, of which Francis takes part but not necessarily in a dominant role. The example that comes to mind here is the *Regula non bullata*. Although it was the work of several hands and took over twelve years of

the fraternity's life, Francis's name is associated with it and his role is clearly dominant.

3) Finally, it is necessary to question if the thought expressed is original or to determine the influences that it reveals. This rule too applies to the *Absorbeat* prayer. We shall see how shortly.

Desbonnets continues on the originality of Francis's thought as "a modern worry," unknown and never considered by the ancients. They attributed works to Augustine or Gregory the Great sometimes merely because they were well-known and the books would sell. A comparable example today would be to write a novel and put John Grisham's or Danielle Steele's name on it. The book would definitely sell but you may need millions to pay off the inevitable lawsuit. Desbonnets distinguishes between what is original and new to Francis and what is the common legacy of Christianity. In the case of the *Absorbeat*, the expression of the thought is more like Augustine, filtered through John of Fecamp, than the simple, ordinary language of the unsophisticated Poverello. Francis is heir to the great ideas of his time but the way he handles them, accepting some and refusing others, or borrowing from others is his own originality at work.

The History of the Editions

The earliest mention of the *Absorbeat* prayer is in Luke Wadding's edition of the *Writings of St. Francis (*1623). He gives the Latin text:

> *Absorbeat, quaeso Domine, mentem meam ab omnibus quae sub caelo sunt, ignita et melliflua vis amoris tui; ut amore amoris tui moriar, qui amore amoris mei dignatus es mori: per temetipsum Dei Filium, qui cum Patre, etc. Amen.*[3]

[3] Luke Wadding, *B.P.Francisci Assisiatis opuscula* (Antwerp MDCXXIII), 116.

The title comes from the first Latin word *Absorbeat* which is variously translated as "absorb," "detach," "draw my mind away from," and even "lap up." Most translations do not have the doxology ending. What is more important about Wadding is that he gives two sources for the prayer. One is *Opera Omnia S. Bernardini Sienatis,* Tome 2, Sermon 60, art. 2, ch. 2 at the end. Bernardine also used two other canticles attributed to Francis in his sermons. The first is entitled *Amor di caritate/perche m'hai si ferito* and the second is *In fuoco l'amor mi mise*. Father Laurentius, in *Collectanea franciscana.* v B9 (1949-50), 50, says the more likely opinion is that they are two *laude*, the first from Iacopone da Todi and the second from Hugo Panziera. These two *laude* speak of seraphic love similarly to the *Absorbeat* but are left out of his critical edition by Esser. De facto, Bernardine never said explicitly that Francis actually wrote the *Absorbeat* prayer.

The second source for the *Absorbeat* identified by Wadding is Ubertino da Casale in 1305, a century after Francis. The citation is from Ubertino's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesus,* book 5, chapter 4, found in *FA:ED* 3, 190-91. Wadding claims that Ubertino says that Francis used this prayer before and during his stigmatization on LaVerna.

In 1904 Leonard Lemmens in the Quaracchi edition of the *Writings* accepted the *Absorbeat* prayer from Wadding due to the witnesses of Bernardine and Ubertino, whereas H. Boehmer included it in the *opera dubia*.

In 1906 Paschal Robinson translated the Lemmens manuscript into English and kept the prayer in question. He called it "the Prayer to Obtain Divine Love" and claimed "the authenticity of this prayer, accepted by the Quaracchi editors, rests on the authority of St. Bernardine of Siena and Ubertino da Casale, both of whom are quoted in its behalf by Wadding."

In 1960 Leo Sherley-Price translated the *Mirror of Perfection* and the *Writings of the Saint*. He repeated the Quaracchi editors' opinion and Wadding's on this prayer. In his translation he changed the latter part of the prayer

to "so that I may die for love of Thy love, Who out of love for Thy people didst die on the tree of the Cross."

In 1964 Placid Hermann affirmed the following about the prayer *Absorbeat*:

> There is so little manuscript support for this short prayer and its form is so stylized and so different from Francis's way of writing that it cannot be attributed to Francis with any certainty. It does, however, resemble broadly a short invocation attributed to St. Francis by Celano in 2C 196: 'The love of him who loved us much is much to be loved.'[4]

In a footnote, Hermann cites the opinion of the Quaracchi editors:

> To prove the authenticity of this prayer we can adduce nothing but what Wadding said, namely that St. Bernardine and Ubertino da Casale said Francis was its author. It too may be a prayer that Francis knew and taught to the friars.

In 1970 M-B. Peteul wrote a monograph on "La priere 'Absorbeat'."[5] He shows a possible source for the prayer in the *Meditationes Sancti Augustini* which is now attributed to John of Fecamp (990-1078) and was in vogue from then until the writing of the "Imitation of Christ." Therefore Francis probably knew it in his time. Peteul thinks Francis changed the ending to emphasize a total love until death and not just a "memory of divine sweetness." In 1969 Peteul had written another monograph in which he showed similarities between the famous ch. 23 of the *Earlier Rule* and ch. 11, nn. 5 and 6 in the *Meditationes*.

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[4] Placid Hermann, *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi*, Tran. Benen Fahey (Chicago; Franciscan Herald Press, 1964), 160-61).

[5] M.-B. Peteul, "La priere 'Absorbeat'," in *Etudes Franciscaines*, XIX, 49, (1969): 37-44 and XX, 55-56, (1970), 391-98.

In 1978 Cajetan Esser's critical edition appeared. He included the *Absorbeat* in the *opera dubia*. Esser states that the prayer comes from the Church Fathers known in the Middle Ages, without specifying Augustine, and that Ubertino did not claim Francis as the author, merely that Francis used the prayer.

In 1982 in the new critical edition in the Italian version Esser extends his remarks more fully. He says:

> This prayer, which before Wadding has no manuscript evidence at all, was considered by Boehmer under the *Dubia* and on the other hand considered authentic by Lemmens. Lemmens depended upon Ubertino da Casale and St. Bernardine of Siena who both cited it. This prayer is a combination of patristic texts, well-known and very much used in the twelfth century. The text of the prayer does not reveal any original contribution from St. Francis and, contrary to what Wadding affirmed, is not even attributed to the saint as author, neither by Ubertino nor by Bernardine. From what they both said, one can conclude that Francis knew this prayer and used it. All the rest is pure conjecture.[6]

In a footnote Esser affirms that in her "Revelations," St. Gertrude the Great has a prayer with the same formulation, dating circa 1289.

In 1986 the editors of the *Fonti Francescane* followed the same tenor from Esser.[7] They include Esser and "other scholars" who found the connection with John of Fecamp and Schmucki who did work on the "laude" of Francis.

Post-Esser copies of the writings do not include the *Absorbeat*. For example, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* does not have it except as cited by Ubertino. Neither does the collection *Francesco d'Assisi – Scritti*, ed. Aristide Ca-

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[6] Cajetan Esser, *Gli Scritti di S. Francesco d'Assisi*, Nuova ed., Critica e versione italiana (Padua: Ediz. Messagero, 1982), 65-66.

[7] *Fonti Francescane,* ed. Ernesto Cairoli (Assisi: Ed. Francescane, 10th printing, 2008), 143.

bassi, 2002, nor the latest collection by Carlo Paolazzi, ed. *Francesco d'Assisi – Scritti.* ed. critica, Grottaferrata, 2009. Esser included "spurious" texts in his collection along with criticisms of them which made him conclude to their un-authenticity. Later collectors have no further need of those "doubtful" texts and therefore simply ignore them. It can be a loss.

The situation is probably comparable to the first two centuries of Christianity when the four Gospels were in circulation among the people, together with "spurious" or "apocryphal" Gospels. While the apocrypha were unauthentic and did not endure the identification of the canonical Gospels, scholars today in the Holy Land and beyond are looking again at the apocrypha and finding some beautiful and interesting elements. The same is true of Francis. A prayer like the *Absorbeat* may not be his direct writing but it says something beautiful and significant about his seraphic love to the point of being willing to die for the Beloved.

Parallel Passages in Francis and Clare

In the Writings of Francis and Clare there are a few parallel passages to the *Absorbeat* prayer. There are other expressions of the same intense seraphic love but in writings that are clearly authentic. They provide the reasons why Bernardine and Ubertino could mistakenly think that the *Absorbeat* was to be included in the canon of the writings. If a writing sounds like Francis, it may not actually be Francis. If a writing sounds like Francis and really is his work, then we know that fact due to other criteria, as outlined by Desbonnets above. For example, in 2C, 196, the text quotes Francis: "He said: 'The love of him who loved us greatly is greatly to be loved.'" Another example is Francis in his "Prayer Inspired by the Our Father," v. 3: "Holy be Your Name: May knowledge of You become clearer in us that we may know the breadth of Your

blessings, the length of Your promises, the height of Your majesty, the depth of Your judgments." (*FA:ED* I, 158).

In Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* 1:4, there is Francis thirsting mightily for God:

> From that time on, as he was removing himself from the pressure of public business, he would eagerly beg the divine kindness to show him what he should do. When the flame of heavenly desire intensified in him by the practice of frequent prayer, and already, out of his love for a heavenly home, he despised all earthly things as nothing; he realized that he had found a hidden treasure, and like a wise merchant, planned to buy the pearl he had found by selling everything (*FA:ED* 2, 533).

In his Letter to the Order, n. 29 is one of the clearest parallels: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you, may receive you totally!" (*FA:ED* 1, 118). This is Francis to his brothers.

With Clare, the parallels are fewer but at least equal in intensity. In her First Letter to Agnes, vv 7-12, she writes:

> Thus you took a spouse of a more noble stock, who will keep your virginity ever unspotted and unsullied, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom in loving, you are chaste, in touching, you become more pure, in embracing, you are a virgin; whose strength is more robust, generosity more lofty, whose appearance is more handsome, love more courteous, and every kindness more refined, whose embrace already holds you; who has adorned your breast with precious stones, placed priceless pearls on your ears, surrounded you completely with blossoms of springtime and sparkling gems and placed on your head a golden crown as a sign of your holiness (*CA:ED,* The Lady, 44).

It is interesting to note that Clare borrowed these words from the feast of St. Agnes, virgin and martyr. She used someone else's words to express what she felt deeply in her heart. In her Fourth Letter to Agnes, v.23: "Finally, contemplate in the depth of this same mirror, the ineffable charity that he chose to suffer on the tree of the Cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death" (*CA:ED,* 56). In the Process of Canonization for Clare, three witnesses testify to her desire for martyrdom. The sixth witness, Sister Cecilia, a nun at San Damiano, said:

> Lady Clare had such a fervent spirit she willingly wanted to suffer martyrdom out of love of the Lord. She showed this when, after she had heard certain brothers had been martyred in Morocco, she said she wanted to go there (CA:ED,168-69).

The other two witnesses say the same thing and they are Sister Balvina, a nun of San Damiano and Sister Beatrice, Clare's natural sister, the seventh and twelfth witnesses, respectively.

Conclusion

The *Absorbeat* prayer is a spurious but helpful writing of St. Francis. It is spurious because he did not write it. It is helpful because it expresses the same seraphic love to the point of death for the Beloved that appears in Francis's and Clare's writings, in their lives and in their actions. Francis desired martyrdom as much as Clare did. He also desired the Stigmata and the love that animated those wounds and received both. If Francis used the *Absorbeat* personally and taught it to his brothers by word of mouth, his actions spoke even louder of his total self-giving to the point of death for the Beloved.

I would like to close with another example of the same kind of self-giving love. Richard Crashaw was an Anglican priest and poet, born in England in 1612. His poetry is

mystical and sometimes sensuous but he is considered one of the Five Great Metaphysical Poets of English literature, along with John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Robert Southwell, and George Herbert. He left England for Italy and there became a Roman Catholic priest and chaplain to English-speaking pilgrims at the House of Loretto. He wrote a couplet on one of his volumes of poetry:

> Live Jesus, live, and let it bee/
> My life to dye for love of Thee.

In 1649 while helping people with the fever epidemic, he died of the plague at the young age of thirty-seven. His couplet resembles the thought and affection of the *Absorbeat*.

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The Times and Sources of Clare's Life

David Flood, O.F.M.

Niklaus Kuster and Martina Kreidler-Kos have drawn up a new chronology of Clare of Assisi's history.[1] They explain their reasons for doing so. Lothar Hardick published a chronology of Clare in 1953 to mark the 700th anniversary of her death. It became the reference for Clare's years in the following decades. In 2003 Giovanni Boccali published a new edition of the Canonization Protocol (CP) of Clare. While working on the protocol, he ran down all the references to dates and presented them in a new chronological table. He explains how the CP requires we date Clare's move from home to Francis and his brothers, in contrast to Hardick, one year back to March 1211. That has its consequences for other dates. Moreover, recent scholarship has disassociated the story of Clare and her sisters from the story and the dates of the communities of women that Pope Gregory IX brought together. Kuster and Kreidler-Kos conclude that we need a careful review of Clare's chronology. They think it important to make Bocalli's dates from his work on the CP better known. They want to fit his dates into a complete dating of Clare's story. Finally, they review the consequences for dating the events of her story in the scholarly work done on Franciscan history generally.

[1] Niklaus Kuster, Martina Kreidler-Kos, "Neue Chronologie zu Klara von Assis," in *Klara von Assisi*, ed. Bernd Schmies (Münster: 2011), 287-326.

The two scholars begin with a synopsis of important chronologies. In a long list (289-294) they put at one level the Clare event, the date offered by Bocalli, then the date of Hardick, and finally the date proposed by others. In the last parallel box we find, for instance, the dates proposed by Regis Armstrong (2006) and Gerard Pieter Freeman (2000). Following on the list (294-95), Kuster and Kreidler-Kos make three comments that will guide them in developing a new chronology. First of all, Hardick's date-list is more detailed than Bocalli's, who limited himself to dates relative to the CP. Secondly, Hardick and Bocalli did not take into consideration the politics between popes and Clare. Kreidler-Kos and Kuster will supply such dates. Finally, the many who depended on Hardick's chronology were all one year late. There result new contexts and correspondingly the need for new accounts.

Kreidler-Kos and Kuster set out to actualize Hardick's list. They find Bocalli's dates "surprisingly dependable." They also find it necessary to indicate the dates of the sisters and the dates of the papal policy on religious women in order to mark the actions and years of Clare herself. Out of their new chronology there necessarily arises a new history. They bring it into play when they correct a date of Boccali. Events that they cannot give a date to they do not list in their chronological table. As a help to those who use the table in their study of San Damiano and Clare, Kuster and Kreidler-Kos give in a column the key sources to the event. And so we have on pages 296-306 "The Times and Sources of Clare's Life: A New Chronology."

Following the new chronology, the two scholars feel they have to offer their reasons for not following several dates given by Bocalli. This has to do in particular with the dates when different sisters joined the community (307-13). They also touch on leadership in San Damiano and Clare's conflict with Pope Gregory IX.

Finally, through their careful efforts to get Clare's times and sources clear, Kreidler-Kos and Kuster have

learned a thing or two. They share some of what has come to their light with their readers. In the last fifty years scholars have thought they were on surer footing with the chronology of Clare than was the case. They relied unduly on Hardick's datings, who understandably was working with what was known in the early 1950s. Work done in English in particular has to come up with satisfactory arguments for its alternative dates. Only recently has Boccali's times (of 2003) begun to circulate.

Small differences in dates can have major consequences. One example concerns leadership in San Damiano. It has been handled as political fallout from the fourth Lataeran council. That no longer washes. It has to do neither with the office of abbess nor the question of a rule, but with Francis's departure for Spain and the worry that arose. Another instance is the ease with which historians went along with Hardick's account of the entrance of Clare's youngest sister in the community, supposedly in 1229. The two scholars have also redated Gregory's text *Deus Pater* to the 1230s and given it a role in the conflict between Clare and Agnes of Prague on the one hand and the pope on the other. And these, Kreidler-Kos and Kuster contend, are not the only events that call for new consideration.

Niklaus Kuster and Martina Kreidler-Kos expect scholarly work on the history of Clare and San Damiano to continue once their new chronology finds its way out of German-language study into the wider world.

Histories of the Franciscan Movement at the Turn of the 21st Century: *Nel nome di san Francesco* of Grado Giovanni Merlo

Michael F. Cusato, O.F.M.

In 1968, John Moorman, the former Anglican bishop of Ripon, published his eagerly awaited volume on Franciscan history, *The History of the Franciscan Order, from Its Origins to the Year 1517* by Oxford University Press (it was subsequently reprinted in the United States in 1988 by The Franciscan Herald Press). Ever since its appearance, Moorman's volume has served as the primary touchstone among secondary sources for the history of the Friars Minor and their associates. More balanced and less polemical than the work of the German Observant Franciscan Heribert Holtzapfel (1909); surpassing in scope and detail the magisterial 1928 volume of the French Capuchin Gratien de Paris (republished in 1982); more engaging and analytical than the turgid narrative of the Conventual Raphael Huber from the 1950s; and more analytical than the 1979 volume by the Capuchin Lazzaro Iriarte: Moorman's book is a classic work of historical reconstruction, interpretative prowess and eminent readability.

But the publication of Moorman's work coincided with the beginning of a new wave of research in Franciscan studies that took off in the mid-1960s (particularly though not exclusively in Italy). Since that time, men and women interested in the Franciscan movement have benefited from a wealth of studies, available in a variety of languages, on nearly every aspect of Franciscan life, ministry and impact upon Church and society. However,

no concerted attempt had been made to synthesize these new materials and perspectives into a cohesive narrative until quite recently. Within the last eight years, however, we have been offered three new major works by recognized scholars of the Franciscan tradition: the Italian Grado Giovanni Merlo, the Englishman Michael Robson and the New Zealander Maurice Carmody. The purpose of this presentation is to give a brief assessment of the work of Grado Merlo, titled *Nel nome di san Francesco*, which in 2009 was translated into English as *In the Name of Saint Francis* by Franciscan Institute Publications.[1]

The Author of this Work

Grado Giovanni Merlo is a well known and widely respected historian of medieval Christianity who is a *professore ordinario* at the Università degli Studi di Milano. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he boasts an impressive and prolific record of scholarly publications. Merlo began his scholarly career studying the varied manifestations of medieval religiosity in northern Italy, especially that of the marginal religious groups of the region. Attentive to questions of heresy and dissent in the area, he quickly established himself as one of the leading experts of medieval Waldensianism. During the early 1980s, he extended his research to the Franciscan phenomenon in a series of probing articles and studies, which garnered the attention of Franciscanists. Consequently, in 1994 he was elected to the prestigious post of president of the Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani in Assisi – a post which he continues to occupy to this day. A frequent contributor to the annual October Assisi *convegni,* the summer study programs in Perugia

[1] All three histories were reviewed in a session organized and sponsored by the Franciscan Institute at the 46th Annual International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The other two histories were commented on by Steven J. McMichael (Robson) and Lezlie Knox (Carmody) whose presentations will be published in future issues of *The Cord.*

and Assisi, and a host of other conferences on Franciscan themes and personages, his publication in 2003 of a dense and synthetic volume on medieval Franciscan history is a testament to the breadth of his knowledge of the field of Franciscan studies. *Nel nome di san Francesco* is his most ambitious monographic publication to date.

General Observations

Let me begin by first making a few general observations about the work itself, followed by several remarks about two fundamental themes which, I believe, characterize Merlo's particular reading of Franciscan history. Next, I will highlight a couple of specific items which, I think, are particular strengths or weaknesses of this remarkable volume. And finally, I will make a few comments about the English version of the book.

Even at 490 pages (not counting the annotated bibliography at the conclusion of the volume), Merlo's work reads like an engaging, at times passionate, essay. Indeed, as one who has met him on several occasions, the text actually reflects the author's own lively, energetic and personable personality, even in translation. Reading these pages, one can almost visualize him, gravelly-voiced and cigarette in hand, excitedly spinning out the story for you, certain that you, too, will be caught up in the drama of the complex interactions of its principle actors. And yet, for all its communicative immediacy, the work never loses its scholarly character. The absence of footnotes is counterbalanced by abundant excerpts of primary texts, all in translation (and frequently with the Latin or Italian originals).

The structure of the volume is quite standard; its six chapters present no innovative reorganization of the historical materials. The first two chapters treat Francis and the growth of the movement he founded until his death in 1226. Chapter three takes us through the development and difficulties of the order up to and through the gen-

eralate of Bonaventure; chapter four, the drama of the Spiritual Franciscans and the famous controversy with Pope John XXII in the 1320s and 1330s. The fifth chapter examines the wide-ranging subject of the Franciscan Observants, whereas the sixth and final chapter deals with the division of the order and the unexpected appearance of the Capuchin renewal of Observant Franciscan life, with a bow towards the missionary efforts of the friars in the New World.

Two Over-arching Interpretative threads

Standing back from the work as a whole and trying to assess what distinguishes this presentation from other such attempts at synthesis, I would simply single out two over-arching themes that I find to be *implicit* in the narrative of Grado Merlo and distinctive to his approach to Franciscan history. The two themes serve as interpretative keys to his presentation of the story.

The great strength of the volume rests in its ability to assimilate and synthesize vast amounts of historical data and source-materials, ranging over three and a half centuries and much of the European continent, and to structure this content into a highly readable presentation. But the whole enterprise is bound together by one theme that helps to explain the title chosen by the author for his historical project. Eschewing the more common interpretative theme of the observance or non-observance of poverty (the leitmotif of choice followed by most commentators of medieval Franciscan history), Merlo widens the lens a bit more in order to reframe that history under the broader rubric of the friars' search for and clarification of the specifics of their Franciscan *identity*. In other words, his narrative depicts how various groups of friars, in successive periods, each pursued their own version or understanding of the minorite charism which – in spite of the striking differences between the different groups – they believed to be connected in some way to their found-

er, Francis of Assisi. None of this is controversial; we are dealing in the realm of how the friars perceived – and needed to perceive – themselves. But: whence this amazing and occasionally disconcerting diversity?

The problem seems to be rooted in the fact that, according to Merlo, Francis identified the charism or way of life which the Lord had revealed to him as the following of "the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" – to use the familiar wording of the Rule of 1223 and the *Testament.* This identification of the minorite charism with the life of the Gospel, this defining of the identity of the friar as the evangelical life, however, would soon prove to be problematic. For the Gospel contained within itself any number of possible expressions of Christian life and ecclesial service. Even during the lifetime of Francis, not all within the order had the same understanding of the content or contours of what constituted the "the Gospel."[2] Indeed, according to our author, so rich and fertile, so multi-faceted and compelling – but also so general and open to interpretation – was the concept of Gospel life, that numerous friars, coming to the order from vastly different cultural and ecclesiastical environments, saw in this dynamic new movement led by Francis of Assisi, a way not only to attain personal holiness but also offering them a wide array of possibilities for service to Church and society. Some were drawn more to the eremitical and penitential way of life; others to apostolic and missionary ventures; and still others to more direct involvement in the life and activities of Church and society, even at the risk of forsaking their social status as social *minores*. For Merlo, each orientation represents a more or less valid expression of the Franciscan charism. But thus was also born the contrasting and sometimes conflicting versions of minorite life that would wrack the order over the course of the next three centuries, each group more or less convinced that it was authentically living *nel nome di san*

[2] Cf. my remarks on this subject in: Michael F. Cusato, "'The Gospel' according to Francis of Assisi," in *Mélanges en l'honneur d'André Vauchez* (forthcoming, 2012), 257-76.

Francesco. In a word, the minorite charism was too fertile to be contained or constrained within the confines of one normative expression because the Gospel itself was so fertile and multi-faceted.

The second over-arching thematic is related to the first: namely, that as the early Franciscan movement grew and developed over time and across vast spaces, the minorite charism – the dynamic vision of the founder- very quickly came to be institutionalized into various structures, practices and behaviors as it evolved – to use the famous phrase of Théophile Desbonnets – from "intuition to institution," from *fraternitas* to *ordo.*[3] Merlo insists that this process was both entirely normal and absolutely necessary; every religious inspiration needs historical rooting to perdure in time and into the future. Moreover, he contends, the order was set on this course of institutionalization by Francis himself, most especially by seeking out a close collaboration with the papacy in the person of Innocent III, Honorius III and several other ecclesiastics in the Curia not the least of which was Hugolino dei conti di Segni, the future Gregory IX. By stressing this theme, Merlo has thus cleverly reframed the controversial and emotionally-charged question of the clericalization of the order within the broader and more neutral context of institutionalization. For, it was only the order's association with the Roman Curia, he claims, that assured the continued existence of the Franciscan movement, time after time across the centuries, as popes were frequently asked to intervene, clarify, arbitrate and sometimes even dictate what the Franciscan order ought to be. And in this process of clericalization, our author asserts – quite controversially, I would say – that Francis himself had sanctioned the involvement of his friars in studies, un-

[3] Théophile Desbonnets, *De l'intution à l'institution: les Franciscains* (Paris: Éditions franciscaines, 1983) [translated into English by Paul Duggan and Jerry Du Charme, as: *From Intuition to Institution: The Franciscans* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988) and now available from Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure, NY].

derstanding that the people of God of their day could not be adequately served otherwise.

These two over-arching themes give shape to the thrust of Merlo's work: the multi-faceted identity of the minorite vocation and the necessary institutionalization of the charism ensuring its survival, growth and impact upon society. A few brief comments on these two themes are in order.

On the one hand, it is refreshing to read a history of the Franciscan movement that has not been colored and skewed by the historical squabbles between the different wings of the First Order Franciscan Family. The presentations of Holtzapfel, Huber and to a lesser extent Iriarte were all marred by such partisanship; Gratien de Paris and Bishop Moorman – the first a professed religious, the second not – had allowed their volumes to be shaped by their special predilection for the Spiritual Franciscans. As a lay historian, Grado Merlo, to his credit, has been able to avoid the partisan tone of these earlier works. His is, in many respects, the view of an outside observer rather than that of an insider with a particular agenda to defend or a particular version of Franciscanism to advocate for. This gives his narrative a cohesive and integrated tenor, in which all elements of the story receive their due.

That said, it's one thing to respect the friars' self-perception that each of their versions of Franciscanism – since related in some manner to the values of the Gospel – was valid and being lived in the name and spirit of Francis. It is another, in the interests of an alleged historical objectivity, to assume that they all were equally valid. For the history of Franciscanism is, at root, when seen from inside the order, the story of a struggle not just over identity but over fidelity as well. The choices made by this or that group of friars to live or act in certain ways were not neutral; nor were they of no consequence. Every version of Franciscanism was not equally valid (in the sense of being equally faithful to the intentions of the founder). Not all developments were in accord with the originating spirit. This unease among the friars and the consequent

struggles among them – over their fidelity to their identity – is what gives rise to that which Robert Lambertini and Andrea Tabarroni have called *l'eredità difficile* (the difficult or troubled inheritance). To assert as much is not to skew the history but to reconstruct it ... faithfully. But this assessment, of course, is the view of an insider!

Some Specific Observations: Real Strengths

While the array of events and personages covered in Merlo's magisterial volume are fairly well known to those familiar with the broad sweep of medieval Franciscan history, his narrative has been enhanced by a number of particular elements which ought to be singled out for well-deserved praise. Let me enumerate four such elements.

1. One of the primary reasons why the work of Grado Merlo is a refreshing and vital read on Franciscan history is his exceptional familiarity with and use of sources materials in reconstructing that history. But particular mention should be made of his scouring of the papal registry for bulls and letters – a goodly number of which have only rarely been cited in standard presentations of the history – which help to shed light on occurrences and situations which, in the absence of detailed reinterpretations or fresh analyses of events known to the reader, provide a somewhat different or fuller understanding of such events. This is particularly true in his narration of events after the death of Francis through the 1250s when the identity question was being debated and reformulated. The same can be said, in the second half of the volume, with respect to Merlo's use of any number of chronicles and histories – quite unknown to this reader – from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, giving a slightly different caste to the events narrated in the classic work of Duncan Nimmo on the Observants. By way of example, I can cite: Bernardino d'Aquilano's *Chronica fratrum minorum de observantia nuncupatorum* (on the fate of the

group known as the Clareni), the 1354 Constitutions of Guillaume Farinier, the *Apologia fratrum minorum de Observantia* of Gaspar Schatzgeyser, the letter of Cardinal Gaspar Contarini known as the *Apologia dei Capuccini;* the *Semplice et divota historia dell'origine della congregatione de' frati Capuccini* of Bernardino da Colpetrazzo; and the chronicle of Caterina Guarnieri from the Santa Lucia monastery of Foligno. The integration of the testimonies given in these sources wonderfully adds to the breadth of our understanding of these later events.

2. Beyond the question of sources, three issues in particular were treated with fresh – I would even say highly original – interpretative eyes. The first is Merlo's treatment, albeit summary, of the development of the penitential movement from 1221 until the 1289 bull *Supra montem*. What is striking here is not only Merlo's historical contextualization of the hesitancy of the order to assume responsibilities for the penitential groups associated in some way with the minorite movement in the towns of central and northern Italy; but his chronicling of the events leading up to the drafting of a new rule for the Franciscan Third Order by the Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV. Although his contention that there was, in fact, no Franciscan Third Order *per se* until this moment might not be shared by all readers of this history (myself included), his treatment *does* force us to rethink the development of this branch of the Franciscan Family in a new way, without the customary assumptions. Secondly, whereas most commentators who read Franciscan history through the lens of the poverty controversy tend to traverse the second half of the fourteen century by following the remote antecedents of the Observant Reform movement (through the activities in Italy of John of Valle, Gentile of Spoleto and Paoluccio dei Trinci), Merlo – while not neglecting this story – explains the seemingly enigmatic actions of Gerard of Oldone (or Guiral Ot), the general minister appointed by John XXII after Michael of Cesena's deposition, who gave permission in 1334 (the year of Angelo Clareno's death) for an alternate lifestyle

sanctioned by the order to flourish in the province of Umbria. Given Gerard's historical reputation as a Franciscan laxist and papal lackey and the proximity of this permission to the repressive measures taken against the *fraticelli*, Merlo's historical reconstruction not only unravels the apparent mystery but points the way toward the policies of other ministers in dealing with diversity of opinion and practices among the brothers as to observance of the rule. Thirdly, our author gives a new characterization to the period between the slap-down of the Spirituals by the papacy and the flowering of the Observance as a time of conscious consolidation of Franciscan identity demonstrated through the activity of the compiling of source materials, most notably in the *Chronicle of the XXIV Generals* and the *Conformities* of Bartholomew of Pisa. One thus has a rather different understanding of how the order at large began to pull itself together after its near fatal collision with the papacy in the 1320s and 1330s. Paradoxically, it is precisely the activities of the order during these same decades, whereby it de-emphasized or outright repressed some of its most distinctive but controversial elements – like, the observance of its poverty – that would set the stage for the reaction which will coalesce into the Observant Reform Movement. To this reader, these three elements or emphases are quite unique to this author.

3. A third strength is the manner in which our author covers this same Observant Reform. Known to most readers, if at all, through the important volume of Duncan Nimmo[4] – which reads, according this commentator, like a doctoral dissertation, making it a difficult slog – the Observant Reform movement, by its very nature extremely diverse due to its multi-national character and wide chronological sweep, is laid out in a clear and understandable manner. To my mind, though covering far fewer pages and less detail than Nimmo, Grado Merlo has actually presented a more coherent and understandable

[4] Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)*, Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina 33 (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987).

narrative of this complex, wide-ranging phenomenon. Indeed, the picture painted of the history in the wake of the traumatic events after the 1430 General Chapter of Assisi (and its aftermath in the bull *Ad statum*, officially sanctioning the Conventual lifestyle) and the turbulent Chapter of Padua in 1443 (and its aftermath in the bull *Ut sacra*, officially sanctioning the Observant form of life and parallel governance structures) illuminates, as never before, the attempts of members of both groups to overcome their antipathies and reconcile their differences between 1450 and 1517. Of special merit is the role played by friars such as the Colettan Boniface of Ceva, and the Conventual Giles Delfini, in these last-ditch efforts (albeit ultimately unsuccessful) to both reform and bring reconciliation among the various factions. Although the Capuchin saga is fairly well known, our author is especially keen on showing the similarities – and thus the perceived dangers – between the Capuchin friars and the Protestant reformers, in Italy or just beyond the borders in Switzerland. The reader thus gets a richer picture of what was at stake here.

4. And lastly, allow me to also note that, while the overall presentation is engaging and lively, our author does seem to have his favorite personages; and his narration of their careers allows us to appreciate them in a new and more positive light. The first – somewhat surprisingly (given his positive assessment of the issue of institutionalization and the relationship of the order with the papacy) – is Angelo Clareno whose vocation, role and career Merlo traces with sympathy and admiration. Not depicted as necessarily recalcitrant or even scornfully rebellious, Angelo comes off rather as a friar trying to live his vowed life with others of like mind who saw their vocation differently than the prevailing authorities in the order or the Church. Indeed, Merlo follows his legacy by keeping before our eyes the fate, first, of the *fraticelli* and, then, of the *Clareni* up to the latter's reintegration into the order

through the bull of union in 1517.[5] Even more striking is the figure of John of Capistrano. In Merlo's account, Capistran – quite rightly – emerges as *the* single towering figure of the momentous fifteenth-century events. Though the friar himself was intent on pointing people towards the importance and cult of Bernardine of Siena, our author extends the same courtesy to Capistran whose indefatigable efforts for the order (especially from 1430 forward) but also for the Church (in his campaign against the Turks) loom large in this narrative.

Some Specific Observations: Some Limitations or *Lacunae* in the Narrative

Having highlighted the strengths of Merlo's volume, it is also important to highlight a few *lacunae* in the presentation.

1. It should be noted that while our author is intent on underscoring the essential and irreplaceable role played by the charismatic founder, Francis of Assisi, in early Franciscan history, he has unfortunately chosen to downplay the importance of the first brothers who constituted the fraternity that formed around him and who carried the Gospel project forward in the first decades after his death in 1226. As a result of this decision, our author does not integrate into his narrative the essential role played by the development of the *Early Rule* in the formulation of the minorite charism. Leaving aside *why* this might be the case, the fact of the matter is that the absence of this component deprives Merlo of the content he needs to accurately flesh out the socio-economic meaning of the "humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ" and what Francis means by the following of the Gospel. Moreover, it similarly weakens his understanding of the issue of contention that erupted between Francis and the clerics, leading the founder to resign at the Emer-

[5] Presented in the papal bull *Ite vos in vineam.*

gency Chapter of September 1220: this debate is what made the *eredità difficile* so difficult.

2. Given the current state of historical research on the sources, it was perhaps inevitable that a history of the Franciscan movement would focus primarily on the First Order – Francis and his friars – to the neglect of the other actors in the minorite drama. Clare does get her due to a large extent; but one cannot say the same for the history of the Clares, especially after the drafting of the Urbanist rule in 1263. Colette is mentioned almost in passing; and barely a mention is made of the other great Franciscan women of the thirteenth century – Elizabeth, Margaret, Angela – or beyond. Other than the aforesaid treatment of the Third Order and a few brief issues raised during the pontificates of Boniface VIII and Leo X, there is little new added to our understanding of this phenomenon so much in need of illumination. Merlo's volume is thus primarily concerned with the First Order, complemented by the occasional inclusion of aspects of the history of the other two components of the *trina militia*.

3. In the first decades of its existence, the Franciscan movement was primarily an Italian phenomenon. Even after its expansion throughout Europe and beyond across the centuries, the fulcrum of the Order remained on the Italian peninsula and the bulk of the sources at the disposal of historians comes largely from Italy as well. Consequently, in spite of occasional forays into France, Spain, England and Germany – especially regarding the Observant Reform Movement – Merlo's history is largely Italian in orientation and in source-exploitation. Contingent on whether other archives and sources might become available in the future, more work needs to be done here to fill out this picture. As a result of this, one of the most important – and least studied – aspects of Franciscan history frustratingly remains unexamined: the evolution of the Conventual lifestyle from the mid-fourteenth through the early sixteenth century, especially as it came to be identified with the Grand Couvent in Paris. For it was precisely *this* form of Franciscan living that became

the point of contention with the Observants in France and Spain, if not in Italy as well, during the generation of Bernardine and Capistran. Surprisingly, Huber's history never elucidated this; sadly, nor does Grado Merlo's.

4. I would have preferred to have seen a greater emphasis on the apocalyptic thought of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. To my mind, this is essential for understanding not just the turmoil in the order's relationship with the papacy but critical for illuminating the Franciscanism of men like John of Parma, Bonaventure, Peter of John Olivi and Angelo Clareno – to name only the most prominent. The theme of apocalypticism *does* appear near the end of the work under the guise of the so-called "Twelve Apostles of Mexico"; but its place earlier in the narrative would have helped explain the unease over the institutionalization of the order so heralded by Merlo and its relationship to the structures of power in the Church and world.

5. Lastly, one wonders at the wisdom of trying to cover the missionary efforts of the early-to-mid-sixteenth century since, by this time in the narrative, it could scarcely be given its due. Hence, it appears as a hasty addendum to an already long and sprawling story which, up to this point in the final chapter, had concentrated on the order as a charism and as an institution within the Church and less on its activities and achievements within the societies of Europe, let alone anywhere else.

Final Comments

A few final comments are in order.

First, regarding the English-language version of the book published by Franciscan Institute Publications. Grado Merlo's somewhat conversational style in Italian is not easy to render into user-friendly English. Our translators – there was a primary and a secondary translator – had their difficulties. Sometimes the volume reads with ease, clarity and vivacity; at other times not. It could

thus have used another round of editing. In spite of this, Merlo's voice manages to come across – and this is indeed a credit to the translators and editors. What is disconcerting in this edition is the decision to translate certain common phrases of the Franciscan lexicon almost literally (avoiding, for example, even the term "Friars Minor") as well as a disturbing lack of consistency regarding various other items. When the Sacro Convento is literally rendered as "sacred convent" or "Monaco di Bavaria" is rendered as a person rather than as a place (Munich in Bavaria), it prompts one to wonder. Hopefully, such infelicities will be rectified through more rigorous editorial eyes in a future edition of the volume.

It is my contention that Merlo's monumental essay is surely one of the most solid histories of the First Order during the Middle Ages, not to replace Moorman but to complement it for its more up-to-date scholarship and historiographical equilibrium. What is needed, perhaps as a further complement, is another model – more along the lines of the *New Cambridge History of the Middle Ages* – whereby scholars in a variety of areas cover in greater detail and expertise the full spectrum of the history of the Franciscan movement: all three branches of the Family – their internal histories as well as their social, ecclesiastical, economic, intellectual and artistic contributions. This would, of course, require a multi-volume project. Perhaps it is time to present the whole story in all its complexity and richness for English-reading audiences with the same panache and equanimity as Grado Giovanni Merlo has in this lively historical essay.

Book Review

Benfatti, C.F.R., Solanus M. *The Five Wounds of Saint Francis*. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2011. 263 pp. $16.95

The oft-used term, the "Franciscan Question" relates to the ongoing debate in Franciscan circles regarding the early written materials about St. Francis and their use. It might be said that the second most popular "Franciscan Question" is the question of what exactly took place when Francis went up Mount La Verna in the Fall of 1224. In *The Five Wounds of Saint Francis,* Solanus Benfatti adds his own contribution to the discussion of this time period of Francis's life when he was said to have received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ.

Benfatti begins with a General Introduction in which he comments on reading the early writings about Francis and also outlines his own particular approach which he terms "historical-theological." He then proceeds, in part one of the book, to introduce the earliest written materials concerning Francis's stigmata, offering assessment of their value as a source in the discussion. Part two of his work takes up the grand task of synthesizing four recent scholarly positions of the early sources regarding Francis's stigmatization – positions primarily represented by the work of Chiara Frugoni, Giovanni Miccoli, Jacques Dalarun and Richard Trexler. After summarizing these positions, Benfatti offers his own reconstruction of what may have taken place on La Verna. He closes his work with several chapters that seek to delve into Francis's personal experience of the stigmata.

In the preface of his work, Benfatti admits that he chose to enter the scholarly debate regarding the stigmata of Francis with some hesitation as it has been said to be an unsolvable mystery that has been mined to the greatest degree possible. In the same pages, he also reveals that he was motivated to join the fray when he realized that theories on the stigmata of Francis that attributed it to be of a non-miraculous nature were being presented as conclusive. He has particular concern for the Franciscan devotee who may not have the necessary skills to discern the delicate questions of historicity made in these conclusions.

Benfatti's purpose in writing is clearly demonstrated in the structure of the work. He seems intent on reaching a popular audience while at the same time engaging the critical scholarship related to the topic. This effort produces mixed results. On the positive end, Benfatti does seem to offer something for both audiences. For the average reader interested in the question of Francis's stigmata, he provides a good founding in the pertinent sources and the language of the text is readable and enjoyable (there is an element of the mystery genre that keeps one intrigued). Also, scholars of the Franciscan tradition will find that Benfatti's bibliography is extensive and his own critical evaluations quite engaging. He gives a particularly solid treatment of the scholarly positions regarding Francis's stigmatization, and while he is clear at times in his own disagreement with elements of these same positions he nonetheless engages them critically. The challenge presented by trying to reach such distinct audiences is that it creates a work that may be too general for some and tedious for others.

Perhaps the most valuable and thought provoking section of *The Five Wounds of Saint Francis* is the third part in which Benfatti hypothesizes what might have been Francis's personal experience of the stigmata. This almost seems like an impossible task given Francis's own silence concerning the stigmata for whom they were indeed a "great secret." Still, Benfatti takes an indirect approach

to the question by establishing Francis's own spirituality from his writings and seeking to see where the stigmata might fit in this self-understanding. Benfatti successfully shows, through analysis of Francis's writings, that it would be unfairly caricaturing Francis to understand his Gospel literalism as simply an external mimicry of Christ. If one did this, it easily lends to an understanding of his stigmata as non-miraculous (perhaps a self-imposed act of penance). Rather, Francis truly desired to be a follower of Christ and this very desire led him to La Verna where he experienced something real and unitive with the God of love. Benfatti reasons with effectiveness that at La Verna, Francis in the midst of great anguish, was moved from self-pity by the apparition of the Seraph and consoled by the experience of receiving wounds not his own, but truly the wounds of the poor Christ whom he loved and adored. Benfatti concludes, "Before La Verna meant to Francis a physical conformity with Christ or participation in Christ's cross, it was the extraordinary, unmerited and very particular care of God for him and for his vocation. La Verna was God loving the man, Francis. La Verna was God holding precious the mission of the man, Francis."

In *The Five Wounds of Christ*, Solanus Benfatti has indeed made positive contributions to the ongoing question of the stigmata of Saint Francis. It is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the subject and may certainly figure in future conjecturing on an event in Francis's life that was both significant and quite mysterious.

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Book Review

Regis J. Armstrong and Ingrid J. Peterson, *The Franciscan Tradition*. Spirituality in History Series. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.

The present volume is the first in a new series launched by the Liturgical Press exploring five major spiritual traditions within the Catholic Church: the Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Franciscans. The co-authors of this volume are recognized scholars within the Franciscan tradition: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. is an expert on the writings of Francis of Assisi and the early Franciscan sources; Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F. is known for her groundbreaking work on Clare of Assisi and other early Franciscan women.

The focus of this inaugural volume is to introduce the reader to Franciscan spirituality – in its various male and female expressions – through a survey of seventeen saintly figures within the tradition. A number of them are canonized saints of the Church (Francis and Clare of Assisi, Anthony of Padua, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Colette of Corbie, Catherine of Bologna, Felix of Cantalice, the Martyrs of Nagasaki, Veronica Giuliani, Jean-Marie Vianney, Marianne Cope of Molokai and Maximilian Kolbe); others are officially recognized as blessed (Junípero Serra and Mother Mary of the Passion); and a few are generally acknowledged as men and women of outstanding holiness (Angela da Foligno, Matt Talbot, and Solanus Casey). In order to account for the broad diversity of the Franciscan Family in history, the authors have wisely chosen representative figures from all four branches of the Franciscan

Family: the First Order of male Franciscans (including examples from all three of its branches: the Observants, Conventuals, and Capuchins); the Second Order of Poor Clares; the Third Order Secular of laymen and women; and the Third Order Regular. Careful to respect the historical development of the latter two phenomena, Angela of Foligno is placed within, but prior to the bifurcation of, the Third Order into its lay and religious expressions. The volume is thus carefully thought out with respect to the complexities of Franciscan history and representative of its medieval, renaissance, early modern, and modern periods.

The overall structure of this slim but substantive volume follows a simple pattern: a biographical sketch of each saintly figure, followed by selections from the writings of (or about) the individual in order to give a flavor of the spiritual orientation of each Franciscan. The work begins with the figure of Francis of Assisi – the premier spiritual giant of the minorite movement. Each major expression of the Franciscan Family is then chronologically introduced by way of the normative text of its branch: the definitive *Rule of the Friars Minor* (p. 11), the *Form of Life of Clare of Assisi* (p. 67), and the *Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (p. 107), as the authors of the collaborative volume of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (FA:ED) call the Short Version of Francis's *Letter to the Faithful*. The volume is rounded out with the contemporary rules of the Third Order Secular (1978) and Third Order Regular (1982). A brief bibliography for each figure concludes the work.

For many years, readers or preachers looking for biographical sketches of the key spiritual figures of this religious tradition have had to rely chiefly on the heavily pious and uncritical *Franciscan Book of Saints* by Marion A. Habig (1959; rev. 1979). One will be pleased to learn that the biographical overviews in the present volume, though considerably more compact in scope, are a major improvement on the older work, especially being more sensitive to the relationship between hagiography and

history. Most of the sketches contain surprising and pertinent details on the lives of each of these saintly figures. The most disappointing sketch – perhaps the most difficult to render due to the amount and diversity of treatments in the literature – is the one treating Francis of Assisi himself. Indeed, the socio-economic and political context of early thirteenth-century Assisi, so formative of the early minorite spiritual vision, is curiously absent is this particular treatment, although one finds a passing reference to it in the sketch on Clare. Rather, the author is intent on framing Francis's spirituality under the rubrics of baptism, the Trinity and the Eucharist. Similarly, there is little mention of the severe tensions which wracked the male movement in the Middle Ages, whereas Clare's travails with the papacy are nicely noted in her biographical sketch.

The selection of texts, which illuminate the spiritual vision of each figure, is judicious and evocative. Indeed, several of the texts (the *Pantheologia* for Bonaventure; the *Testament* of Colette; and especially the letters of Junípero Serra) are particularly well chosen, instructive and sometimes relatively unknown, giving fresh perspectives on the individual.

The one real disappointment of the volume is that there is no synthetic essay attempting to present or grapple with a cohesive vision of Franciscan spirituality. Perhaps this is indicative of the structure of the book or the constraints of the series. But this is to be regretted since the reader is left with a somewhat fragmentary and impressionistic account rather than an analytical presentation of this particular spiritual tradition – ostensibly the aim of the volume.

Finally, the work could have used more rigorous attention to copyediting. Though not egregious, there are inconsistencies throughout (e.g., church vs. Church; St. vs. Saint; mixture of foreign and English renderings of the names of relevant personages; failure to use diacritics in some foreign names and places, etc.); the occasional awkward formatting of introductions and texts (e.g., p.

27); and a few errors (viz., Malik al-Kamil, not Malil, p. 3; 1884 rather than 1844, p. 130). These are relatively minor infelicities in a very useful and instructive volume.

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Book Review

Augustine Thompson, O.P., *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012. x and 299 pages.

Augustine Thompson, Dominican and medievalist, divides his attempt to get to the historical Francis of Assisi into two parts: "The Story," pages 1-145, and "Sources and Debates," 147-289. The book has a bibliography (279-291) and an index (293-299). In the second part of the book the author offers, as the title says, the sources and the debates about Francis of Assisi. To each chapter in the first part of the book, he has, in the second part, a chapter that would justify the story that he tells. Augustine Thompson allows himself to assess the outcome. He thinks "that my Francis is closer to the man … than the figure we find in the modern biographies…." (viii) That is because it "is the result of historical method" (viii).

What we have here in Thompson's Francis of Assisi is highly subjective. The "Sources and Debates" section serves as camouflage for Thompson's "authoritative" (dust jacket) telling of Francis's story. His references to the literature set up his own judgments on events and accounts. The whole project relies on his mind, not on evidence carefully gathered, assessed, and used. And, despite the verdict given on the dust jacket, it is anything but engaging.

I fault Thompson's account of Francis on his "historical" method. Around 1900, Sabatier and Goetz, Sabatier's German critic, agreed on the early writings. The early texts must serve as criterion for assessing the historical

usefulness of any narrative. They also agreed and regretted that the collection was too thin to accomplish much of importance. In the 1930s, in Germany, A. Stroick conducted a seminar on these texts for the students of two O.F.M. provinces. Among those students were Kajetan Esser (Province of Cologne) and Lothar Hardick (Province of Westphalia). With the publication of Esser's study on the Testament of Francis of Assisi in 1949 and the introduction of Josef Lortz on the study of the early writings, the importance of those sources began making their way into research on early Franciscan history. (Disclosure: I was invited to such study and joined Esser in 1961.) Thompson has reason to say (246) that he is determined to give Francis's writings their due. He mentions them regularly in "Sources and Debates."

Given the importance Thompson ascribes to these sources, I propose, he should have introduced them more formally and used them more critically. Since Esser began focusing attention on the early writings, these texts have grown in importance. Thompson is the first to handle the Early Rule as he does, a text, he asserts, produced by Francis in 1221 out of a motley collection of different texts. His dictum does not suffice to replace the common understanding of the text; it developed from the beginning over the years from 1209 to 1221. That is what the text looks like, it reads that way, and that is how it has been handled. No one has been ready to go along with A. Quaglia's proposal that Francis produced it in one magnificent spurt in 1221, and with good reason. Thompson has to offer some justification for his account of Francis shuffling the material together and coming up with the 1221 text. He certainly has to be more clear than on page 93, where he says the brothers did not discuss the material of the text at chapters and did discuss the material at chapters. Francis of Assisi speaks Early Rule XXIV and tells his brothers: Here is our *vita*. Study it together. He clearly implies that they know whereof he speaks. And so Francis established the context in which they are to read the other writings that were accumulating.

Thompson makes a truly puzzling statement when getting ready to handle the sources (163). "There is no 'unbiased' source, including Francis's own writings." (I prefer to speak of the early writings, out of which Francis emerged with his sense of himself. He certainly did not write the Early Rule, the verbal context for the other writings.) The early writings, and the Early Rule first of all, are the conscious dimension of the story Thompson purports to tell. Out of those texts there emerges the brotherhood, to which Francis belonged. He contributed much to the brotherhood's sense of itself. In the course of that process he became the Francis accessible to critical study. Sabatier and Goetz got it right. And could have saved us time and many trees survival. And still can.

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Book Review

Rohr, Richard. (2011). *Breathing under water: Spirituality and the twelve steps.* Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Richard Rohr, O.F.M. once again put into words the wisdom from his lectures on the Twelve Steps. The title, *Breathing Under Water*, was originally from a poem by Carol Bieleck, R.S.C.J., with the common message of rising out of the drowning waters of our addictive culture. The author draws on many parallels of the Gospels of Jesus and very practical "steps" of human enlightenment. At the same time, Rohr refers to the wisdom of the Twelve Step Program as what Francis would call, "the marrow of the Gospel."

Breathing Under Water, is a must-read for any person who recognizes the need to go "inward" on their soul's journey to question what their relationship is with God, themselves, and others. The author guides us on a journey that begins with a feeling of powerlessness or being shipwrecked on a deserted island. It is God's greatest surprise and constant disguise. We always want to be the manager of our lives. But God makes sure that several things will come our way that we cannot manage on our own. We learn from this experience that all mature spirituality is about letting go.

In those moments of desperate desiring, we come to believe a power greater than ourselves leads us on our journey, which becomes a trust walk. This is a time of gradually letting go and handing over so that we can be open to God's healing touch. This touch penetrates dif-

ferent levels of trust and creates right relationships with people we love and whose presence is part of our lives. The tenacity of faith and hope comes from the heart to be broken, and broken open, to have a heart open for others. It is a matter of reconnecting head, heart and body so they can function as one to provide that healing of ourselves and the image of God in our lives.

The sweet surrender will always feel like dying but it is a liberating moment of acceptance of ourselves, others, the past, and reveals our basic resistance to life. We don't leave society to find God but find God in the everyday challenges. There is that myth of sacrifice and renouncing our will. At times our codependency behaviors are disguised as enabling behaviors where love is actually not love. This false side of love is what Jesus and Francis saw to bring about God's message of true love out of the goodness of God and others.

This is what Rohr refers to as the genius of the Twelve Steps. It is not a moral worthiness game of willpower and a false love. Instead, it is turning our will and our lives over to God because of God's love. Our spiritual journey calls us to an understanding of God's love, forgiveness and mercy. This sweet surrender calls one to *radically accept being radically accepted – for nothing!* In the words of Francis, "Love responds to Love alone." In Admonition 19 we are reminded, "for what a person is before God, that he is and no more."

When the light goes on, we realize that "the truth will set you free." People come to a deeper understanding of who they are through those conflicts, inner confusions and struggles with contradictions. The goal comes to be the struggle itself and the encounter and wisdom to get through it. The author also compares it to ongoing shadow boxing, which must be done with honesty and humility. Through these human experiences, we grow in accountability and sustainability to say who we are in a direct encounter with God's love. The healing comes in the acknowledgement that God loves us because we can change. Reconciliation and forgiveness of ourselves

is one of the greatest gifts in the process of healing and building the right relationships with ourselves. It allows a healing and forgiving community to grow in those right relationships. This restores relationships, integrity with ourselves, and communion with God.

The insights into the Gospels prompt us to ask the question: does God "produce" us, or do we, by our efforts, "produce" God? Does faith become a good work or does work all depend on God? What we learn from this is that God is humble and inviting, and we do not need to ask. But part of the mystery is the openness to asking, not to change God, but to change ourselves. Rohr reminds us that we pray to form a living relationship with God. When a relationship becomes an entitlement, it then dies. Prayers of intercessions or petitions situate our lives with honesty and truth. We become beggars before God and the Universe. It forms a right relationship with life itself.

The author highlights that it is important to ask, seek, and knock to keep ourselves in right relationship with life itself. It is developing an "attitude of gratitude." A different kind of payback time is when God fully forgives us and, as wounded healers, we become healers for others. Through being willing to make amends, we learn the insight and wisdom of the message of Jesus. It is the art of being there for others that keeps us from further wounding one another.

Rohr is very creative in addressing the issue of consciousness, being aware of our feelings, and being authentic in our expression of our feelings. At times, this consciousness becomes unconscious and forms a radical disconnectedness by various addictions. It is when we stop trusting our inner self, our true self, that there is an interruption in the healing process of self-esteem or insecurity. We are all children of God and we are called to be good to ourselves and compassionate to ourselves. Are we willing to let God change us?

It is that conscious contact with God in the form of prayer and meditation that leads us to a heartfelt desire to the will of God. It is a spiritual awakening, enabling

healthy codependency. It is an inner freedom. Through this awakening, it becomes clear that *God loves and respects freedom – to the final, full, and riskiest degree.* What *Breathing Under Water* comes to be is an understanding that those people who have undergone suffering and pain come up to be a compassionate people, loved by God, to be there for others experiencing a similar challenge in life. Rohr summarizes that a graced moment from God is when the suffering people can love and trust a suffering God, and through this deep transformation, will save and be there for one another.

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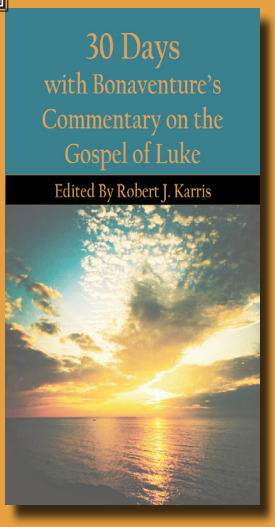

30 Days with Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke
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Bonaventure has many insights to share not only with members of the Franciscan Family, but also with the church at large. From his work on translating and annotating St. Bonaventure's three-volume 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 B.

A user-friendly format begins with the passages from Luke's Gospel followed by Bonaventure's commentary on one or two verses under consideration. Karris's reflection follows that of Bonaventure and concludes with a prayer. Some readers may reverse the process as they are meant as springboards for the readers' own reflections and prayer.

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, OFM, THD, is a Franciscan priest of the Sacred Heart Province whose headquarters are in St. Louis. He earned an STL 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, OFM), 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, OFM), In the Name of St. Francis: A History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism Until the Early Sixteenth Century (by Gordo Giovanni Merlo, translated by Karris and Raphael Bonnano, OFM).

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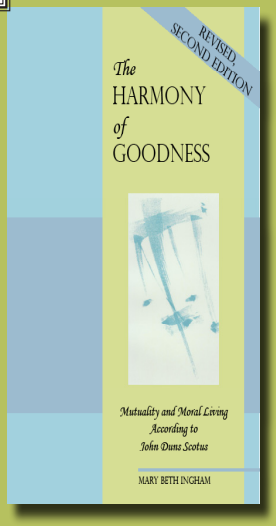

Title: ***The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus***
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Since the first publication of ***The Harmony of Goodness*** in 1996, much work has appeared in print on Scotus' theological and philosophical vision including the gradual completion of the Vatican edition of Scotus' Ordinatio. Various congresses and international gatherings continue to highlight the important significance of this great medieval thinker for the new millennium. Drawing upon the work of several significant scholars combined with her own deepened conviction that understanding Scotus' moral philosophy and theology must be understood within the broader context of Franciscan spirituality, including the role of Stoic and monastic influences on the medieval Franciscans, , Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J., offers this new edition of ***The Harmony of Goodness.*** Scotus' articulation of a moral vision to lived harmony and to moral living as a path of beauty is offered anew by Ingham in this new edition.

SR. MARY ELIZABETH INGHAM, C.S.J., is Professor of Philosophical Theology at the Franciscan School of Theology, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. She earned her Ph.D. from Universite de Fribourg, Switzerland. Her specialties include the History of Medieval Philosophy, Franciscan Tradition, John Duns Scotus, Stoicism and its influence on Medieval Philosophy, and Franciscan spiritual tradition and its influence on Scotus and others. Ingham has authored several texts on Scotus including the best-selling, ***Scotus for Dunces – an Introduction to the Subtle Doctor.***

Mary Beth Ingham's ***The Harmony of Goodness*** *offers a finely tuned study of John Dun Scotus marked by clarity and conviction. No one is more adept and accomplished than Ingham when it comes to exploring, articulating, and retrieving the intricate thought of the Subtle Doctor for contemporary readers. In* ***The Harmony of Goodness****, she provides a compelling ethical worldview that is grounded in the Franciscan belief in the goodness of both the Creator and Creation, and the invitation to live accordingly.*

- Dr. Timothy Johnson, PhD, Professor and Department Chair, Humanities, Flagler College

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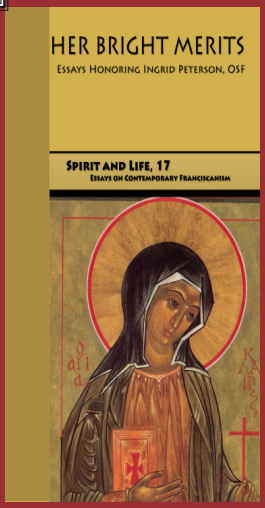

Title: ***Her Bright Merits: Essays Honoring Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF***
Author: Edited by Mary Meany, Ph.D. and Felicity Dorsett, O.S.F.
ISBN: 978-1-57659-3127
Price: $24.95
Pages: 288
Publication Date: May 2012
Format: Tradepaper
Series: Spirit and Life, Volume 17
BISAC Codes: REL012130 RELIGION / Christian Life / Women's Issues
REL012130 RELIGION / Christian Life / Spiritual Growth
REL067080 RELIGION / Christian Theology / History

This book is a tribute to Ingrid J. Peterson, O.S.F., for her academic and scholarly contributions to the study of Clare of Assisi and the women of the Franciscan movement. Peterson is a Third Order Franciscan sister from Rochester, Minnesota, with an undergraduate degree from the College of Saint Teresa, an M.A. in public address from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in English, with a concentration in Medieval Renaissance and Romance Literature from the University of Iowa. She taught graduate level courses on medieval women, Clare of Assisi, and the Franciscan mystical tradition at the Franciscan Institute, Saint Bonaventure University, and the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury, England. Sr. Ingrid was awarded the Franciscan medal in 2001, given by the Franciscan Institute for outstanding scholarship in Franciscan studies—to date, the only woman to be so honored. Peterson's book, ***Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman,*** was published in 1996 by Franciscan Institute Publications.

This volume is divided into four sections, the first of which introduces Ingrid and contains the Medal citation from the Franciscan Institute along with contributions from Ramona Miller and Margaret Carney.

The second section takes us into the heart of studies of Franciscan women. Felicity Dorsett shows us that **Clare** carried the hagiographical tradition of the classic women saints into her world. Jean-François Godet-Calogeras draws on his extensive knowledge of the early Franciscan sources to describe the relationship between **Francis** and **Clare.** Beth Lynn discusses how the life of the **Sisters at San Damiano** was not only the result but also the source of **Clare's** Form of Life. Pacelli Millane delves further into the spirituality of the founder of the **San Damiano** showing us Clare as a "teacher of prayer."

Three essays focus on **Angela of Foligno** who lived and wrote in the fourteenth century. Diane Tomkinson has long argued that Angela was called "Magistra theologorum." Joy Schroeder examines Angela's relationship with her socia, M., while Darleen Pryds completes the trilogy of essays on Angela.

Alison More directs our attention to a woman little known today, **Margaret of Cortona**, exploring the origins of the "Third Order." Margaret Klotz introduces a woman – **Clare of Montefalco** – who was canonically professed according to the Augustinian Rule, but whose spirituality is rooted in the Franciscan movement. Also included is one short essay on **James of Milan** by Paul Lachance who, at the time of his death, was working toward bridging the distance between Franciscan women's spirituality, especially that of **Angela of Foligno**, and certain male writers.
In the third section we recall how Ingrid came to the study of medieval spirituality from a background in medieval literature. Regis Armstrong's reflection "Plunging into Mystery" carries us into this dimension of Ingrid's work.

The last section is Ingrid's summation of what she leaves for scholars to do. It is unusual for the scholar being celebrated in a Festschrift to contribute to that Schrift, but because Ingrid occupies a unique position in the field of Franciscan studies it is fitting to give her the last word.

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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
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 3 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 has160 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 Marqette 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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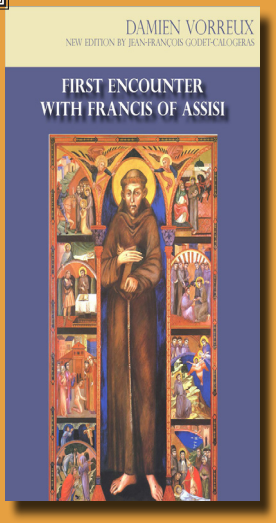

Title: ***First Encounter With Francis of Assisi***
Author: by Damien Vorreaux, translated by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras
ISBN: 978-1-57659-337-0
Price: $14.95
Pages: 112
Publication Date: June 2012
Format: Tradepaper
Series: N/A
BISAC: REL 110000 RELIGION / Christianity / Saints & Sainthood
REL 015000 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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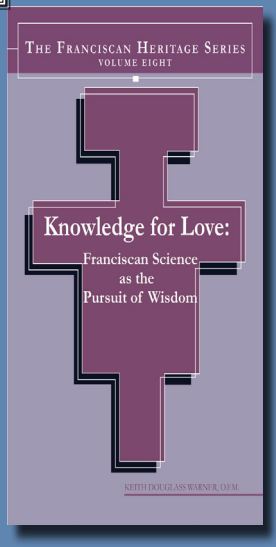

Knowledge for Love: Franciscan Science as the Pursuit of Wisdom
Author: by Keith Douglass Warner, OFM
ISBN: 978-1-57659-361-5
Price: $12.00
Pages: 86
Publication Date: August 2012
Format: Paperback
Series: Franciscan Heritage Series, Volume 8
BISAC: REL 106000 RELIGION / Religion & Science
SCI 034000 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, world-view 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 Women of the Streets: Early Franciscan Women and their Mendicant Vocation 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 lay women gained a kind of religious education through their informal affiliations with the friars that in turn allowed them to attain significant roles of influence and leadership in their communities.

KEITH DOUGLASS WARNER, OFM is a Franciscan Friar and directs the Center's 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.

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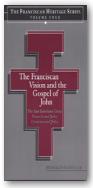
The Franciscan Heritage Series is initiated by the Commission on the Retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (CFIT). The series will, over time, encompass topics such as Christian Anthropology, Ecclesiology, Scriptural Themes, Evangelization, History, the Natural Sciences, the Arts and other areas of contemporary concern. Embedded in this vision and communicated in the Intellectual Tradition are implications for the world of politics, social relations, family life and daily human existence. Can we speak in the midst of our own social and ecclesial location a language of God-with-us, of life, of social witness, a language of the intellect that will help us do what is ours to do in this Christian Catholic Franciscan way of Gospel Life?

Women of the Streets, Early Franciscan Women and Their Mendicant Vocation
by Darleen Pryds
This book about Mendicant women outside the cloister is unique in its content. Rose of Viterbo, Angela of Foligno, Margaret of Cortona, and Sancia, Queen of Naples, were all born within the first century of the Franciscan Order. As women who pursued their religious vocation of voluntary poverty, itinerancy, and preaching outside of monastic walls – in the streets and in their homes – they could very well be called the first generation of mendicant women.
2010: 96 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-206-9 $12.00

Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition
by Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ
The special focus of this study is the appreciation of beauty in the writing of two great theorists of the tradition, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio and John Duns Scotus.
2009: 96 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-205-2 $12.00

Trinitarian Perspectives in the Franciscan Theological Tradition
by Maria Calisi
The purpose of this volume is to present distinctly Franciscan perspectives on the doctrine of the Trinity in the writings of Bonaventure and Francis, and to demonstrate what this tradition has to offer to the Christian Church.
2008: 96 p.
Pb 978-1-57659-204-5 $12.00



The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John: The San Damiano Crucifix, Francis and John, Creation and John
by Michael D. Guinan, OFM
The San Damiano Crucifix, meditation on the Word of God in Scripture and the evangelical life of Francis and Clare are at the heart of the Franciscan vision. Professor Guinan shows us the significance of the Gospel of John as a directive force, particularly in its key images of Word, Lamb, Good Shepherd and the One Who Washes Feet. A CD with a power point presentation on the images of the San Damiano Crucifix is included.
2006: 80 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-203-0 $12.00

The Franciscan View of the Human Person: Some Central Elements
by Dawn M. Nothwehr, OSF
This brief volume discusses several of the central elements of human persons as found within the Franciscan theological tradition. As that tradition developed over the years, the intuitions and insights of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi concerning the human person were further developed and/or restated in language better understood by the people of a particular era. This text provides insight into that development.
2005: 96 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-202-1 $12.00

A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World
by Ilia Delio, OSF
The purpose of this volume is to elucidate in greater detail the theology of creation as a foundational starting point for contemporary belief and practice. The author traces the theme of God and creation from the time of the conversion of Francis of Assisi through the first century of Franciscan life and thought, which culminated in the work of John Duns Scotus.
2003: 80 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-201-4 $12.00

The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components
by Kenan Osborne, OFM
The purpose of this volume is to present some general and major themes of the theological formulation of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as these themes intersect with contemporary perspectives. It provides a solid foundation for future expositions in this series and challenges readers to express these theological themes in preaching, in pastoral practice, in the works of evangelization, and in the formative experiences of friars, sisters, and laity.
2003: 88 p.
✶Pb 978-1-57659-200-7 $12.00

On the Franciscan Circuit

See ad p. 328

See ad p. 327

See ad p. 331